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Why dogs bark (p. 119)

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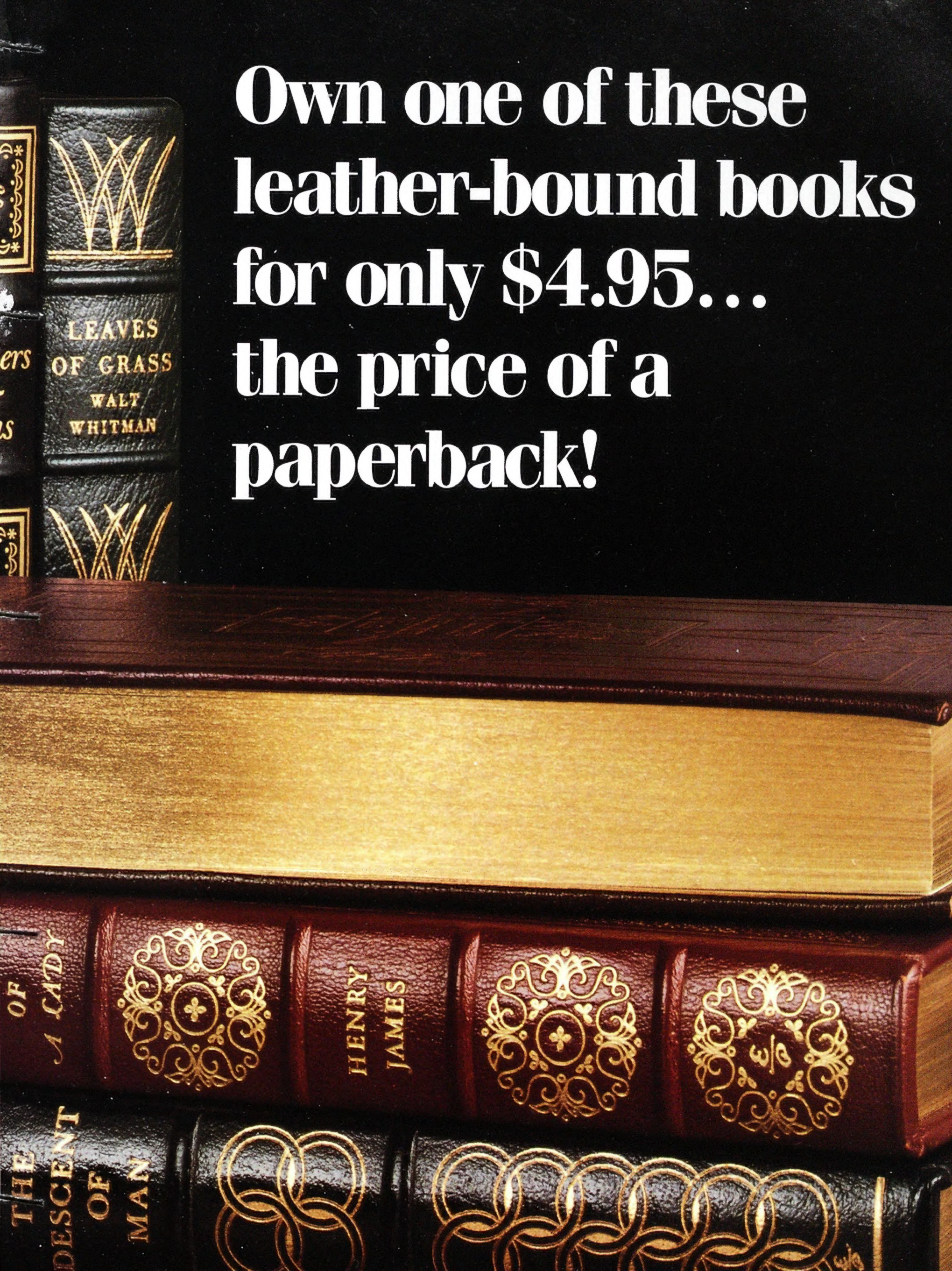

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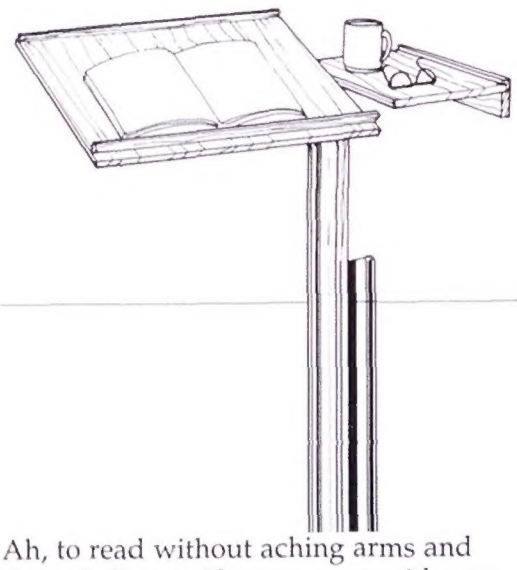

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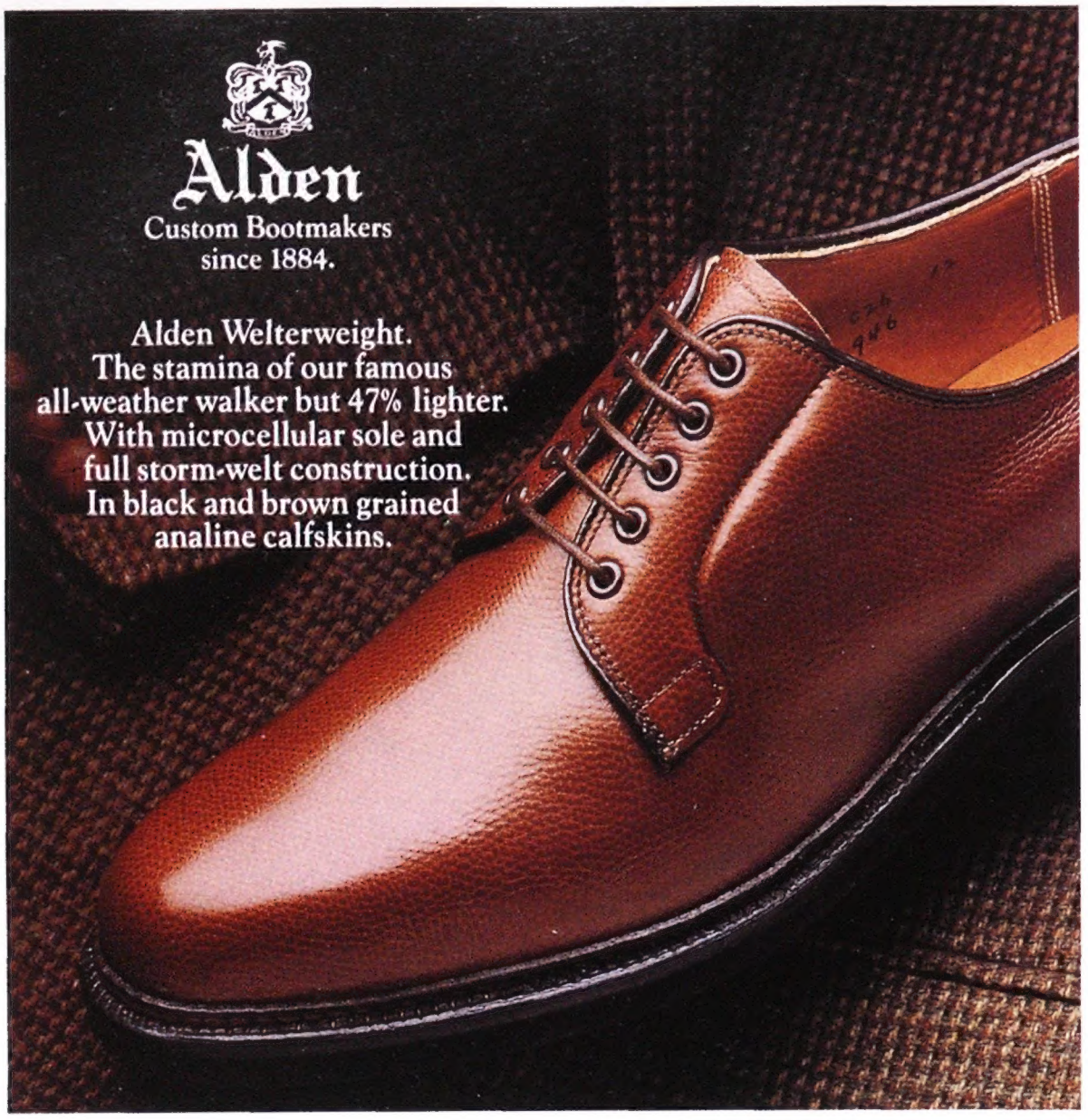

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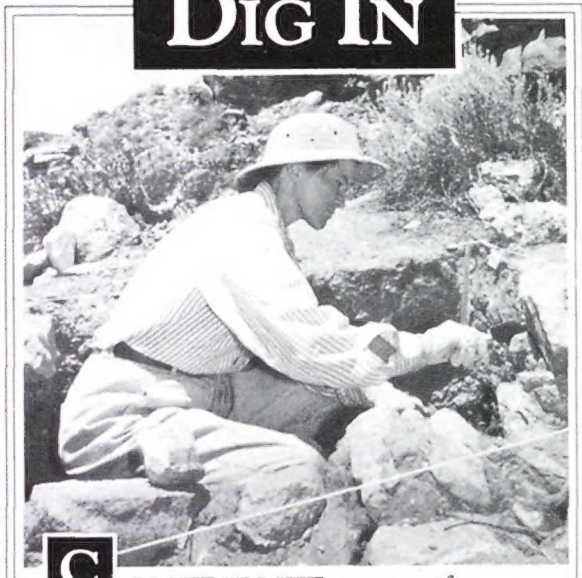

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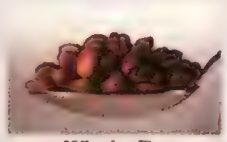

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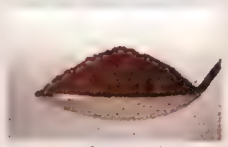

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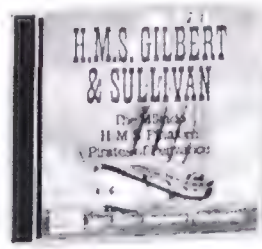

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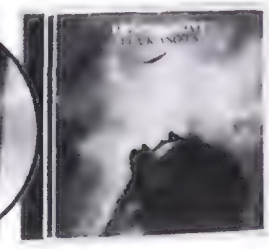

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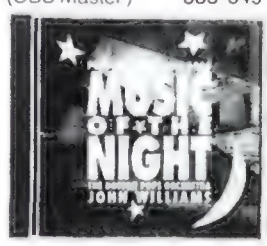

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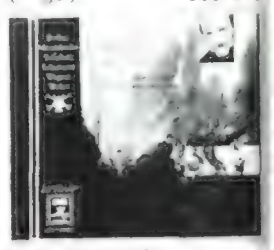

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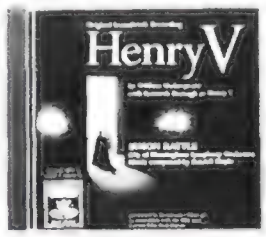

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Secretary Adams' comments

Smithsonian horizons

Andrew Jackson, subject of an exhibit at the Portrait Gallery, embodied the frontier spirit but cannot be typecast

Emerson once opined that "there is properly no history; only biography." The National Portrait Gallery is committed to the further principle that biography must be an embracing account, enriched by being told in art and artifact as well as in text. Both propositions find considerable support in a fine new exhibit there, "Old Hickory: A Life Sketch of Andrew Jackson," appearing through January 13 with the aid of a generous grant from the Tennessee General Assembly. It might be argued that we were a little slow in getting around to this. After all, President Jackson took steps to press the case for the United States when James Smithson's will was being probated in England; otherwise, who knows whether there would even be a Smithsonian?

Senator James Sasser of Tennessee, a Regent of the Smithsonian and, like Jackson, a Democrat, had a necessary and welcome hand in the exhibit's opening. His own awareness of the man, he explained, dates back to a fourth-grade class in Jackson's beloved Nashville, but as chairman of the Senate Budget Committee his real admiration is more recent. Jackson, it turns out, pronounced the national debt "a national curse" and vowed to eliminate it if elected President. And so he did—all $58 million of it, an impressive sum in those days. Campaigning has not yet begun in earnest for 1992, but Senator Sasser let it be known that, on the basis of this heroic performance alone, Andrew Jackson could already count on his vote.

There is more, of course, lots more. Jackson stamped an era of our history with his own identity. Emerging from an early background of poverty and obscurity, he successively became an attorney, U.S. Representative, Senator, judge and spectacularly successful military leader. Inevitably, then, his solid electoral triumphs in unprecedentedly bitter campaigns for the Presidency in 1828 and 1832 were seen as—and thereby became—triumphs of a new kind of populist democracy. As Sasser noted, Jackson's announcement, in his first Inaugural address, that "The majority is to govern" was for its time an almost revolutionary concept.

For all its blemishes in practice, the party organization put in place by Jackson and his supporters permanently overcame skepticism about governance on the basis of greatly widened suffrage. It is surely no accident that Tocqueville's favorable (and prescient) impressions of us as a people, and thus of the viability of regimes based on social equality, stemmed from his extended visit to the United States during Jackson's Presidency. Even his enemies agreed that when Jackson left office he was more popular than ever.

Perhaps to a fault, Jackson embodied the new spirit of his age. A protagonist of the frontier, he took for granted its vigorous—at times brutal—defense against its traditional enemies. It is arguable that he considerably hastened the addition of Florida to the Republic, but his responsibility is greater and more certain for a huge and tragic expropriation and expulsion of Indians from our Southeastern states under the Indian Removal Act. His was also the frontier's restlessness—quickly and publicly abandoning and then returning to national public life; successively becoming interested in trade, land speculation, horses and cotton; and periodically being hard-pressed by debt.

But it was also a frontier of individualists, and Jackson cannot be typecast. Ardently devoted to the Union, he was also a defender of states' rights and limited government. A slaveholder all his adult life, his thinking extending no further than to white adult males, he was yet an eloquent and ceaseless advocate of equality. Without question he was a man of contradictions.

The portraits of Jackson in the exhibit richly record the 30 years of his national renown, virtually to the time of his death in 1845 at the Hermitage, his beloved estate and refuge from the cares of public office. There are the expected, stately oil paintings with him in cloak and uniform, but also miniatures on ivory, paintings on china, savage political cartoons and even an enormous wooden ship's figurehead. We follow his transition from a military to a political career, the process of aging, the changing setting of family, friend and foe. Happily, the Smithsonian has been joined by the Tennessee Museum in Nashville in mounting the show, and it will be on view there from February 18 to April 28.

Jackson's personal loyalties and antagonisms lend themselves well to representation by art and artifact, and hence are a central subject of the exhibit. Equally fierce and unswerving, they were another dominant part of his character. Neither set of these private attitudes correlated closely with his political principles or ambitions, nor, as his dueling pistols in the exhibition and his staunch support of Aaron Burr during Burr's treason proceedings testify, with a high regard for self-preservation. But it also must be noted that virtually everything he became famous for involved a bold and resolute stroke, reinforced by skillful campaigning. There are worse formulas for success and survival in politics. This one may be less in evidence today than it should be.

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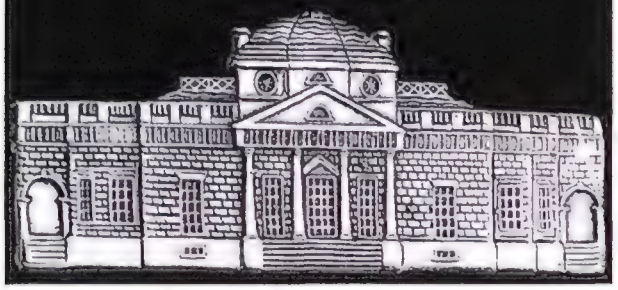

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Letters to the Editor

Frontier

Dear Sir: The horse-drawn hay stacker on page 43 of your November issue took me back to my cowboy days near Merriman in the Sand Hills of Cherry County, Nebraska. My brother and I stacked hay with this same type of equipment; in fact, we actually built a new machine that replaced an older, worn-out one.
Thomas B. Kirby
Bowie, Maryland

Dear Sir: What beautiful memories you brought to life, in the story of my beloved Nebraska Sand Hills!

I lived on a ranch in Arthur County in the 1930s. It was a tough struggle for my parents and our livestock, with the Depression and dust storms. But we maintained a great sense of humor, and that kept us civilized.

Growing up with our rancher friends taught me trust, honesty, love of the land and of my animals, which in return gave love back to me and built character. May God keep all the ranchers and townspeople well and strong, because there just aren't enough Arthur Counties left on our American frontier.
Dotty Vanek Dalrymple
Lancaster, Pennsylvania

Dear Sir: Many things about Arthur County appeal to me: doors and cars don't have to be locked, neighbors communicate, one doesn't see the air before breathing it.

I hope Arthur County can tolerate those of us who long for elbowroom and are filling out changes of address.
Jean Morgan Mills
Alhambra, California

Dear Sir: In 1931 I was a member of the Jones Summer Shows, one of a now long-dead breed of entertainment: the traveling tent show.

We played in towns from five to seven days, giving afternoon and evening performances. At the end of that season, on our way to company headquarters in Beatrice, Nebraska, we were told that a couple of dates had been cancelled and we were to "play Arthur."

Actors are experts at one-upmanship. So, if someone claimed great success in Boston, Chicago or Detroit, the listener would assume a superior attitude and say, "Yes, but have you ever played London? New York? Paris?" Well, more than a few Midwestern companies floundered across the Nebraska Sand Hills and played Arthur. The final put-down among that very select group of bragging thespians was, "Yes, but have you ever played Arthur?"

Ah, Arthur! The foreverness of the rolling grasslands, the blowing sand, the bugs, the spiders the size of your hand (with the speed of a blue racer) AND the wonderful audiences that appeared from absolutely nowhere! Their enthusiasm and applause made us all feel that Broadway was indeed the poorer for never having seen us perform.

No doubt some of the adults in your piece were then little gap-toothed, giggling, wide-eyed young'uns sitting in the front row, making us give our best.
Hazelle Beaver
Phoenix

Micromachines

Dear Sir: Steve Jacobsen's comment that we will "need" to design planes with flexible wings in order to prevent a foreign nation from doing it first—thus rendering our Air Force impotent—is a completely chilling example of science gone haywire.

The old argument of "let's get it first before 'they' do" smacks of 1950s paranoia. Apparently, the fact that this country's participation in the missile race has helped put us three trillion dollars in debt has been lost on some. Not to mention that it has never really made us safer. Rather than contemplating using this infant technology to destroy planes in the 21st century, would it not be better to concentrate on using it to help bring some less-developed nations into the 20th?
Tom Cardamone
Arlington, Virginia

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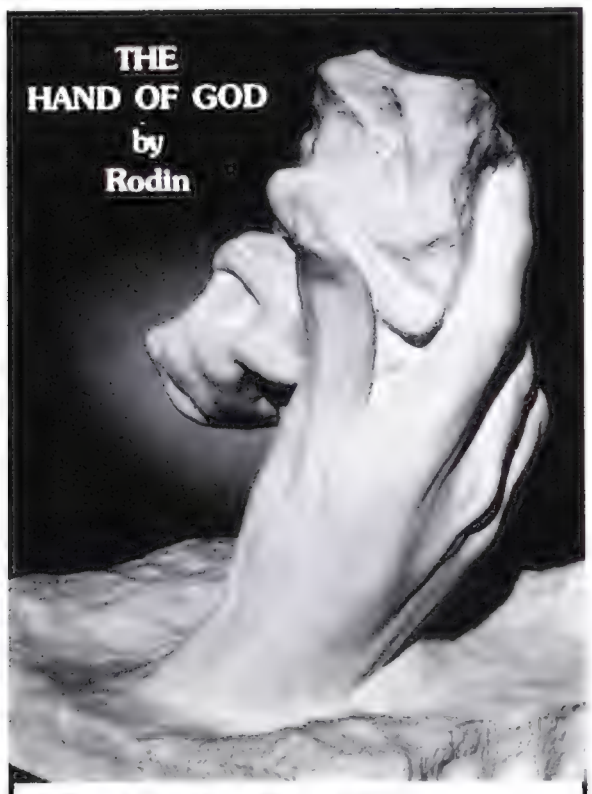

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David Morgan

11812 Northcreek Pky. N., Suite 103, Bothell, WA 98011

Evelyn Cameron

Dear Sir: Evelyn Cameron carefully mounting her prints is a lovely picture; that's all well and good, but let's see what she *really* looked like.
Julia Darby
San Francisco
Evelyn set up this self-portrait (below) around 1912, then climbed aboard Jim while a friend clicked the shutter. Ed.

'High' and 'low' modern art

Dear Sir: Although Bibendum the Michelin Man has reached, in his stained-glass avatar, a high-art form, he began artistically as a quotation, or transformation, from both high art and history. The original Bibendum, as drawn by O'Galop (SMITHSONIAN, June 1986), got his name from the opening line ("Now let us drink . . .") of an ode by Horace celebrating Octavianus' victory over Egypt, confirmed by the death of Cleopatra.
Grover Smith
Durham, North Carolina

Penicillin

Dear Sir: A poignant footnote to Edwin Kiester's fine article shows the far-reaching effects of the lifesaving drug. Near the entrance to Madrid's Plaza de Toros, the bullfighters of Spain have erected a monument. A bronze matador raises his hat in a salute to a bust of Dr. Alexander Fleming.
Kevin Gordon
New York City

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Scotland... a land of misty glens, proud clans, and Highland games. And the inspiration for *Heather,* portrayed about to dance the Highland fling in her first competition. As bagpipes ring, she holds her Scottie and awaits her turn, and the fun to come.

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Shown smaller than actual size of 14" high. Hardwood display stand provided.

Dear Sir: The article on discovery and first uses of penicillin was both illuminating and of great personal interest. My doctoral thesis concerned the kinetics of penicillin fermentation and I spent a post-doctoral year at the Istituto Superiore di Sanita in Rome in 1960-61, where Professor Chain was director of an international microbiology center.

Chain was portrayed in your article as a difficult person. I found him brilliant, forward-looking and forward-thinking.
Harold B. Reisman
Weston, Connecticut

Dear Sir: I was fortunate to be a member of the "Penicillin Team," 1942-45, at the Northern Regional Research Lab, USDA, in Peoria, Illinois.

It is misleading to suggest that the Peoria Lab was simply a "mass production lab." The findings and cultures were quickly passed on to pharmaceutical companies, in perhaps the best collaborative effort ever made between government and industry.
Robert G. Benedict
Seattle

Dear Sir: In April 1945 there were no doctors or nurses in our village in northwestern Germany.

My mother had a bad throat infection. With no medication available, each day her ability to swallow was reduced and her temperature increased. One day the Reconnaissance Company of the 66th Armored Regiment, U.S. 2d Armored Division, arrived to wait for the Russian Army to take Berlin.

A sergeant billeted in our house suggested I speak to the medical officer, who took one look at Mother and gave me a container of white pills with instructions on their use. Two days later she was eating oranges and chocolate the G.I.'s had given her. She lived to her 80th year.

The sergeant and medical officer saved a German woman's life with penicillin. My wish is to find that doctor and thank him for his compassion.
Ruth Petrauskas
Waterbury, Connecticut

Dear Sir: My paternal great-grandparents lived on a farm in Michigan 150 years ago. Their youngest child, then just an infant, developed a high fever and a severe rash all over his body. In that frontier environment, my great-grandmother had received useful advice from time to time from an elderly Indian woman. Desperate, miles from doctors, she carried her sick baby across the fields to the Indian woman, who told her to go into the woods and find a tree stump that had rotted and molded to the point where it could be pulverized easily. The resulting powder was to be applied to the baby's skin. Directions were carefully followed, and the cure was miraculously speedy.

I heard this tale before penicillin was known; to me, it sounds like penicillin.
Robert E. O'Brien
Rochester, New York
Antibiotics other than penicillin have been derived from molds or other microorganisms. Ed.

Dear Sir: In 1944 it was my duty, as a student nurse, to give penicillin to two patients with osteomyelitis. The results were remarkable, but what I remember most was the problem we had mixing the medicine. It took some doing to force sterile water into the small vial of white powder. Three or four nurses would line up from wall to desk, each pushing the elbows of the nurse in front of her while I leaned against the desk, trying to force the fluid into the vial. Thus, we managed to fill those vials daily for two weeks. One day a doctor happened by and witnessed this performance. After nearly collapsing with laughter, he showed us how easy it was to withdraw air from the vial, then inject the fluid.
Shirley B. Sponsler
Perrysburg, Ohio

Dear Sir: Alexander Fleming did not identify the mold he discovered accidentally as *Penicillium notatum*, as Mr. Kiester stated, but believed it to be *Penicillium rubrum*. And his statement that Professor Chain "had drawn a chemical picture of the complicated compound" prior to Anne Miller's illness is inaccurate. The important presence of the element sulfur in the molecule was not discovered until 1943, and the final determination of chemical structure was not achieved until 1945.
Ronald Bentley
Pittsburgh

George Bernard Shaw

Dear Sir: A few years after Shaw's death my wife and I, motoring in England, wished to visit Shaw's Corner at Ayot St. Lawrence. We arrived in the village about 8 A.M. Seeing only one person up and about, I stopped the car, got out and politely inquired directions to Shaw's Corner. The elderly gentleman asked, "What's that?" Told it was the former home of George Bernard Shaw, he replied, "I've lived here 72 years and never heard of him. What does he do?"

At that moment I envisioned Shaw in his grave, roaring with laughter.
Edward Calhoon
Walnut Creek, California

Volunteer firefighter

Dear Sir: I converted an old church next to the fire station into my workshop. Loud noises once in a while and a lot of commotion, but hey! Pure Americana, right? I wasn't even suspicious when the chief dropped in one afternoon, said they were shorthanded with all the men in the fields, and could I take out the small truck when it was needed for grass fires and hold the three-quarter-inch hose? Just like standing in your garden watering the petunias, he said. How could I say no? Besides, it was bound to help my insurance rates.

The lady firefighter going to her first structure fire, an outhouse behind the Mount Calvary Pentecostal Baptist Church, the men chorusing "Holy s---!" Learning to back the Hahn fire engine (all what-seems-like-8,000-never-ending-feet of it). Getting it into pump gear.

I couldn't get one mule-headed man suffering an AMI [acute miocardial infarction] to let me put oxygen on him. He appeared to be about 50 and his "lady" maybe 22, so I looked him straight in the eye, flexed my biceps so my official EMT patch bulged convincingly, winked and told him it would make him "stronger, better and longer-lasting" when he got back home. Boy, did the oxygen flow then; I could barely keep the bag inflated.

If anyone thinks firefighting is addictive, try emergency medicine. I'm now a state-certified paramedic studying for my Nationals. Me, a nice ex-parochial-school girl who failed high school first aid. I thought it was enough to do what Sister Innocentia taught—say three Hail Marys for the victim and those who rush to his or her aid when you hear a siren. I still do that. But it's neat to be able to reach out and help the body as well as the soul. Plus, I've learned to do a great wolf whistle with the siren. Try it. "Fireman for life." Yes ma'am.
Linda Ellis Fishbeck
Wharton, Texas

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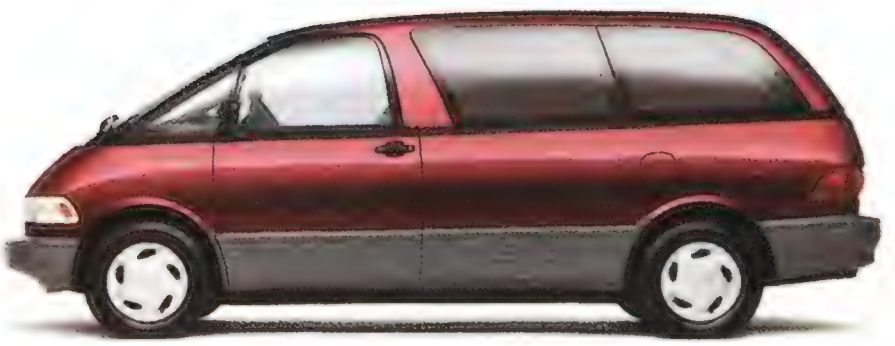

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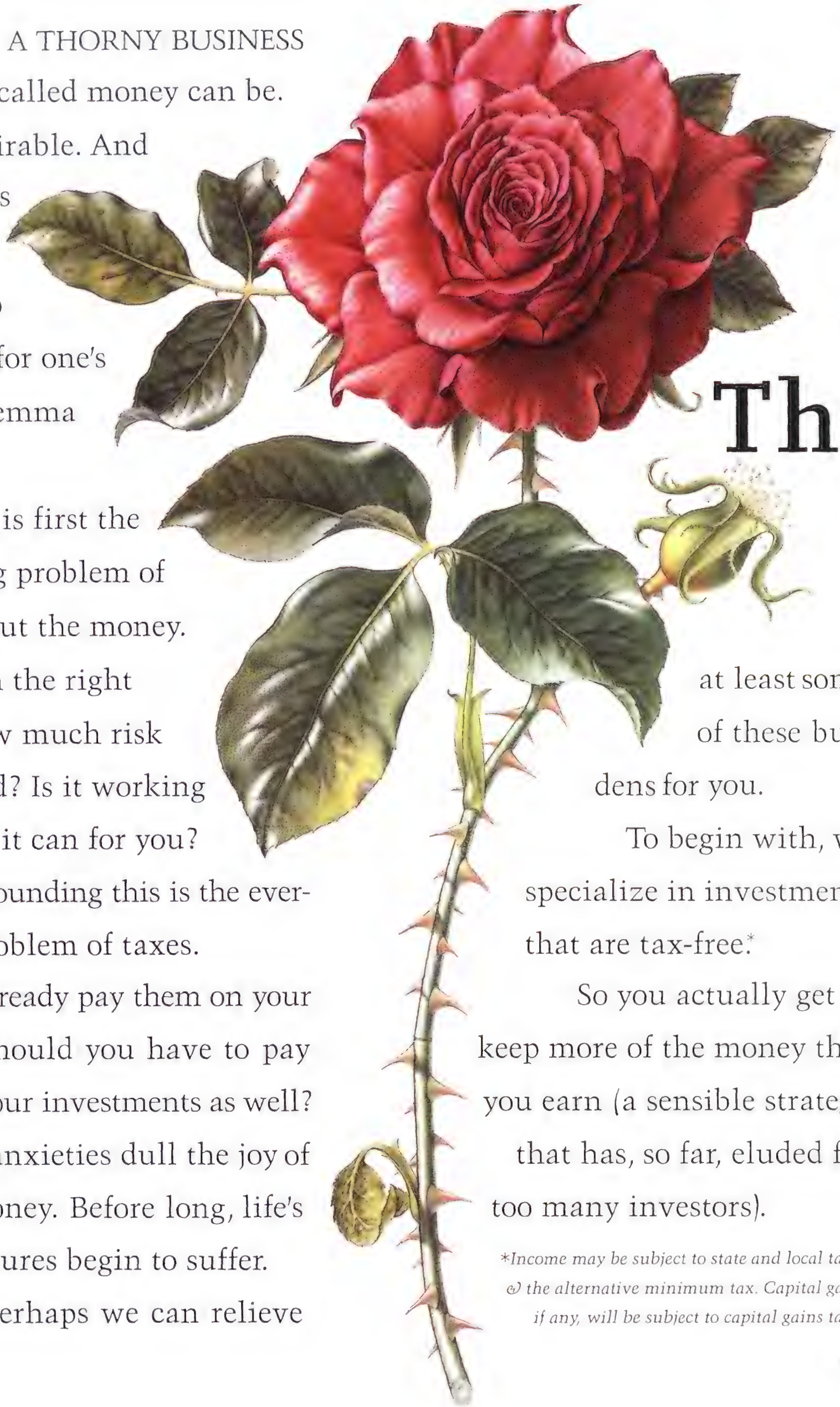

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Around the Mall and beyond

All through 1990 the Smithsonian had to get along without the Freer Gallery, and we won't get it back this year, either. The esteemed museum of oriental art closed its doors in September 1988 in order to get long-overdue renovations under way.

I don't know all the plans. I found that you can't just barge in off the street and start to ask questions without being gently and politely nudged out again. But last November, bristling with credentials and escorted by key staff members, I did manage to gain entry to one part of the Freer—the greatly treasured Peacock Room.

As everyone recalls, this is the London dining room of shipping magnate Frederick R. Leyland as it was lavishly redecorated by our contentious, expatriate American artist James McNeill Whistler. Instead of merely lending advice and a few touches here and there, Whistler, in Leyland's absence, got caught up in the work, turning walls and ceiling into giant canvases for his talent. He followed a peacock theme—an interplay of the bird's blues, greens and golds—and the room became *his*.

After Whistler's death, at the turn of the century, the Peacock Room was taken apart, moved to a London gallery and reassembled. When it was put up for sale, collector Charles Lang Freer, one of the artist's few real friends, bought it.

Again, panels and shelves, walls of painted leather, cornices and pendant lamps, were marked, dismantled, shipped to Freer's home in Detroit and reconstructed. And when the collector died in 1919, the whole shebang was packed off to the new gallery at the Smithsonian that he had bequeathed to the nation.

That's a lot more traveling than your average dining room gets to do, and this one was pretty frazzled by it. In the late 1940s two brothers, restorers from Boston, took the Peacock Room apart for the fourth time, strengthened and renovated it, and retouched Whistler's decor as faithfully as they could. And now, nearly 50 years later, while the Freer itself is being renovated, its treasured Peacock Room is undergoing another restoration, thanks to financial help from the Getty Grant Program. This time, state-of-the-art techniques are revealing Whistler's ideas and methods more clearly than ever before.

So there I was, entering the storied chamber under the guidance of Linda Merrill, the Freer's curator of American art. "It's nowhere near finished," she warned, "but it will give you an idea of how the place will look perhaps ten months from now."

She opened the door. The last time I'd walked through, I'd been one of a handful of hushed admirers in a silent, softly lit, spotlessly clean sanctum where the voice of history whispered. This time, blinking in a blaze of bright lights, I almost tripped on a bucket, dodged between cluttered worktables and stepladders, and was cheerfully greeted by dusty young art conservators.

"Do you see the differences in the colors—in the look of the place?" asked Wendy Samet, the chief painting conservator (right).

As always, I was rendered tongue-tied by being asked an art question but mumbled that the room seemed brighter. They all beamed, and I sighed with relief at having navigated the shoals of inanity.

Wendy Samet and Joyce Stoner of the University of Delaware/Winterthur Museum Art Conservation Program are the main conservators at work in the room. Their helpers include Barbara Ventresco and Peter Nelsen and some conservation interns from Winterthur. Tom Chase and Paul Jett of the Freer's Department of Conservation and Scientific Research, along with Linda Merrill, oversee the project.

Work went on around me as I was led to an unrestored wall panel, a rather somber rectangle in that dark, greenish blue that I remembered. Beside it, another panel, restored to Whistler's original look, contrasted spectacularly. Here was filmy green painted over gold to give a bright, translucent impression. The panel's wooden frame, instead of being almost black, now reveals rich, mottled green-gold finish that matches the dining room's painted sideboard.

One of the reasons Leyland wanted the room redecorated was to show off his Whistler painting *Princess from the Land of Porcelain*. The painting is now in storage and will return to its place on the north wall when the remodeled Freer is finished.

Leyland also wanted to display his prized collection of Chinese blue-and-white porcelain. Shelves were built to hold the plates and bowls, and I dimly recall these wooden racks, built against the walls. They were dark, gloomy, dull with age. Now you can't miss them. They gleam with their gilded surfaces cleaned and refreshed. All they need is those blue-and-white pieces to go on them. "We're hoping to get donations of enough porcelain to fill the shelves," said Merrill. "That will really bring the room back to life."

On every surface of this room—ceiling and walls—the restoration process goes steadily forward. The cleaning away of both old varnish and the work of earlier restorers reveals original Whistler brushstrokes that indicate the artist's

Conservator Wendy Samet removes grime from Peacock Room wainscoating.

When desperate men marched on Washington

1932 was the darkest year of the Great Depression. Factories closed, soup kitchens fed thousands, shantytowns sprang up. In the South, farms failed and families starved. Unemployment hit a staggering 25 percent.

Finally, a desperate army of World War I veterans and their families marched on Washington to claim the cash bonuses they had been promised by Congress. Twenty thousand people set up camps on President Hoover's doorstep. The clash between federal troops and the "Bonus Army" guaranteed the collapse of Hoover's administration and paved the way for the meteoric rise of Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

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search for a special, harmonious effect in the room. Hewing to his peacock theme, he layered a greenish glaze thinly over gold, then painted small, distinct arcs of blue on the green. He went over his own work again and again, trying for the shimmering look of the completed sections that I saw. Underlying gold glinted through a veil of green with blue markings. As Merrill said, it must have been quite a sight in flickering candlelight.

Whistler also created golden peacocks on the insides of the window shutters. Then he went on to paint his famous mural of fighting peacocks over the sideboard. The story goes that the mural was made hurriedly, in a fit of pique after an argument with Leyland.

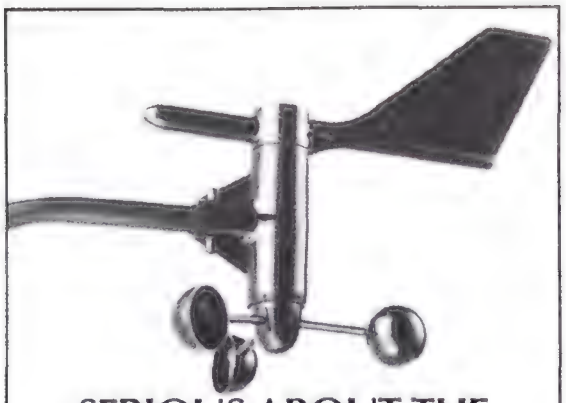
Not so. In fact, a preliminary, full-scale drawing of the mural, probably sketched by Whistler after the tiff with his patron began, survives in a museum in Scotland. (In Leyland's eyes, Whistler was overstepping his bounds—embellishing every inch of the dining room, inviting journalists to the scene in order to publicize his enterprise and demanding payment for the extra, unauthorized work.) In the end, the mural was finished halfway through the seven-month project.

The artist added dark brushstrokes to sections of the room's resplendent walls, giving the illusion of nature's spots in a peacock's plumage. Some have small lines dropping down from them "like false eyelashes," Samet said.

She and other conservators have found that those "eyelashes" aren't Whistler's work at all, but an addition by the 1940s retouchers. Removing those tiny inauthentic lines reveals Whistler's original spots as mere smears of paint, blurry, tossed off with a single brushstroke. "This is what Whistler wanted—a diaphanous feeling from soft, shimmering shapes. He'd have hated those hard, careful little lines."

The restoration of the '40s also went too far in other ways, say the conservators. Darkened by repainting, the ceiling became a somber vault, robbed of Whistler's original lightness. I saw patches of it, newly restored, and was struck by its brighter, happier feeling.

These enlivening changes in the Peacock Room spring from an odd marriage of science and art. Richard Craig Wolbers isn't involved in the day-to-day, hands-on work at the Freer, but I learned that he's responsible for the tech-



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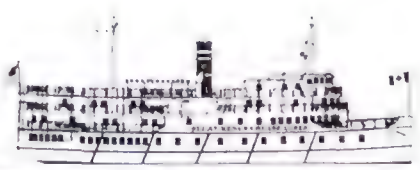

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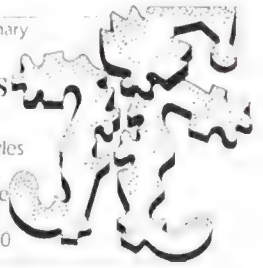

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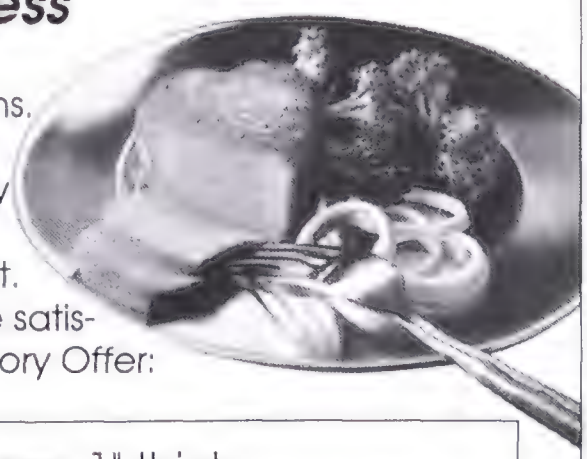

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niques that lie behind this restoration.

I caught up with him at the famed Henry Francis duPont Winterthur Museum in Wilmington, Delaware, where he's an associate professor in the University of Delaware/Winterthur program. Wolbers, as it turns out, is no art historian. He is—of all things—a biochemist, one of a handful of American scientists to turn to conservation.

Wolbers led me to his lab to show me some photomicrographs—pictures taken through a microscope—of Peacock Room paint samples in cross section. The conservators at the Freer take minute corings of the paint and varnish, and send them to him for chemical analysis. The spots, no larger than a pinhead, go under Wolbers' microscope. At a power of about 400 X, distinct layers appear.

Here was a photomicrograph of an untreated sample from the Peacock Room's wall. I stared at a rough rectangle of light and dark strata. "Look from the bottom up," said Wolbers.

He pointed with a pencil. "Here's a gold layer, then a layer of greenish copper resinate. Another gold layer. Whistler is experimenting, you see, trying various combinations and thicknesses to get the feel he wants."

I got the idea. The experiments continued down to a line of blue, then three layers of varnish. The first, the whitish layer, was Whistler's. The other two came from retouchers.

Stains are used to indicate the various bases for the paint. Wolber showed me a sample that had been stained for oil. Streaks of red ran through it, marking the presence of oil. Another dye shows protein. Since casein is a milk protein, the dye indicates casein paint. This was the work of the retouchers.

Analyzing an incompatible addition to Whistler's brushstrokes allows the conservators and Wolbers to find a way to remove it. Grimy oil layers are cleaned with a specially formulated cleaning agent. Colors inconsistent with Whistler's original shades are erased with "discriminating solvents."

There was, I realized, a complex kind of alchemy at work here. Thanks to a team of expert conservators, art historians and a biochemist, we were going to see Whistler's dining room very nearly as it looked the day the artist laid his brushes down and surveyed his magnificent new creation.

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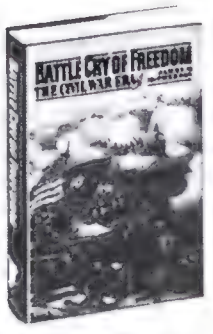

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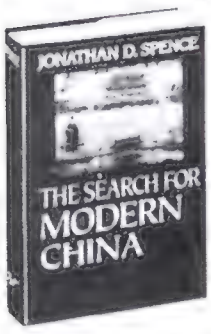

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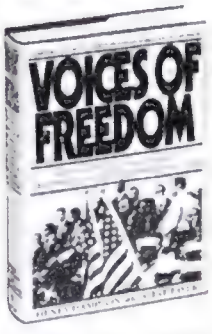

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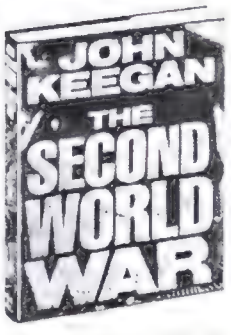

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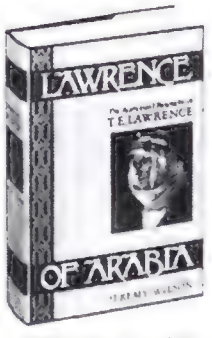

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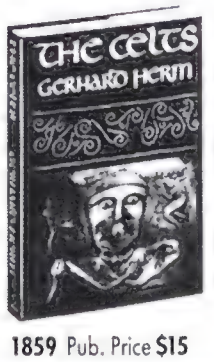

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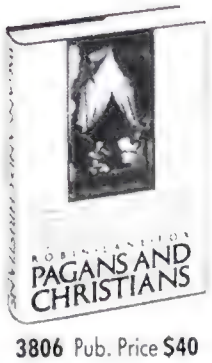

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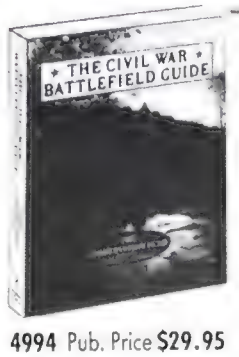

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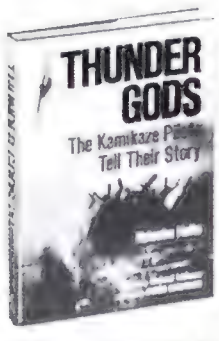

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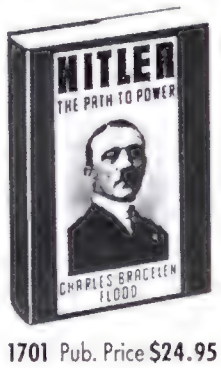

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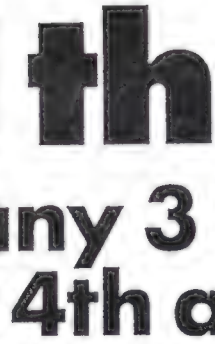

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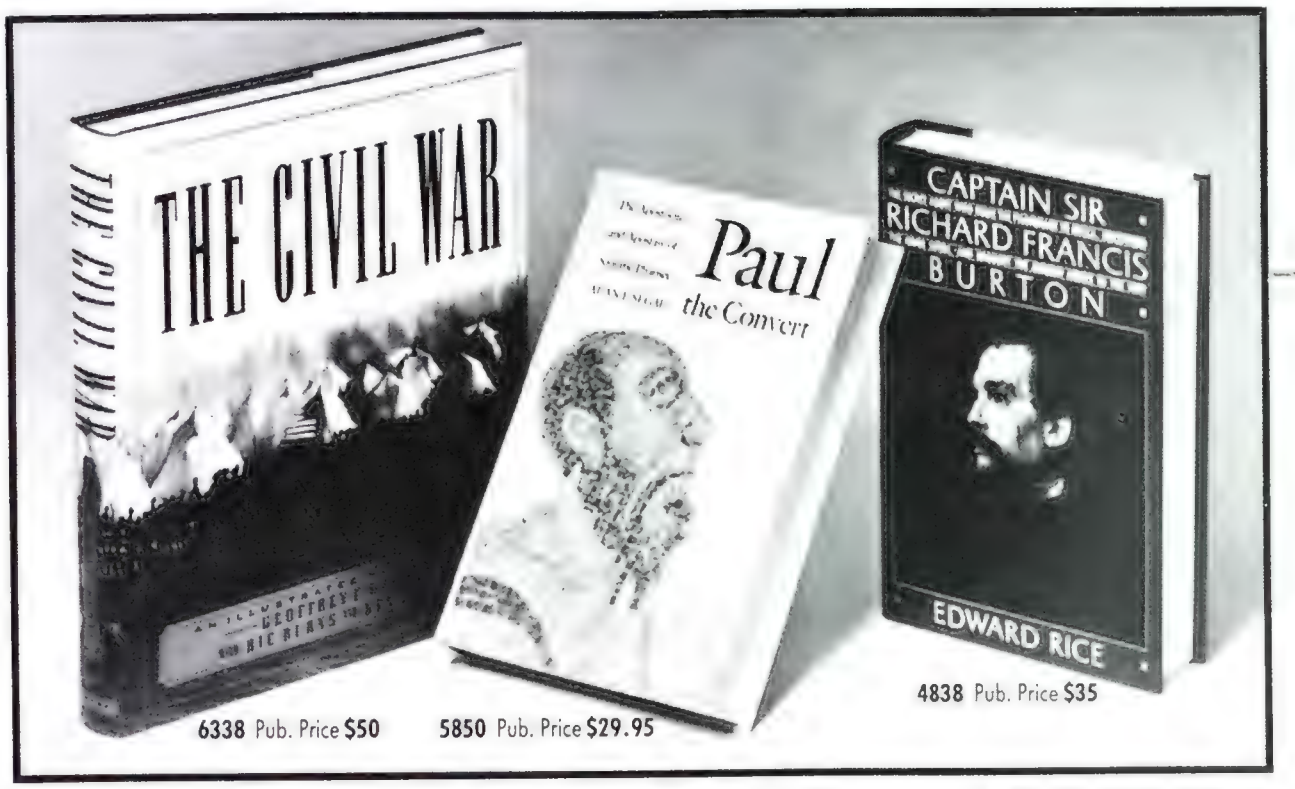

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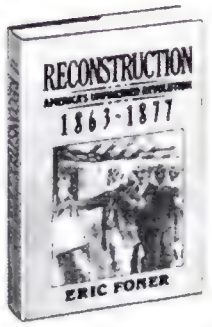

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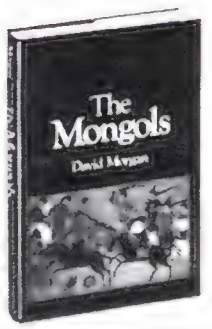

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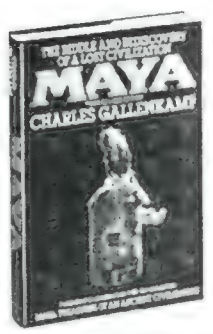

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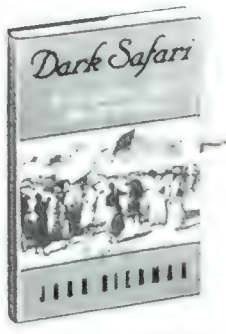

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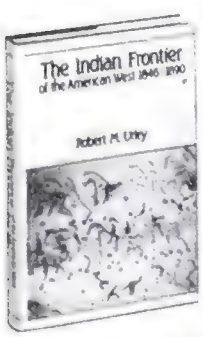

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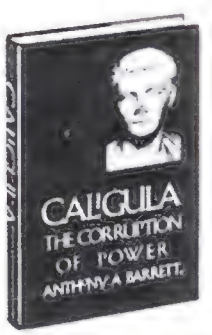

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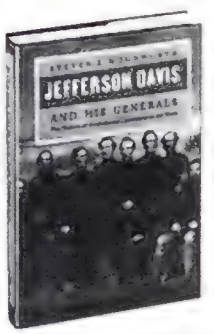

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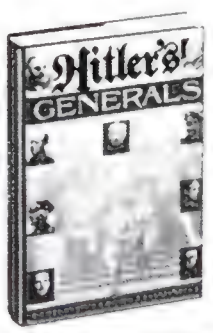

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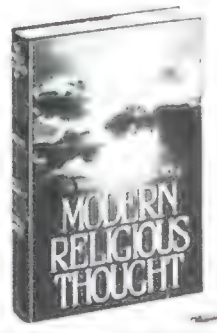

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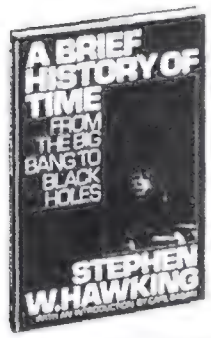

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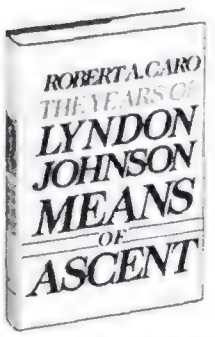

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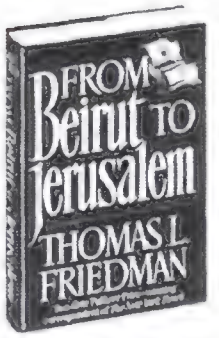

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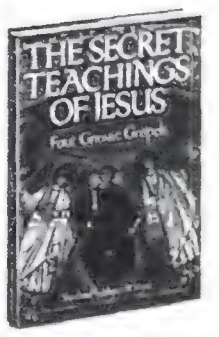

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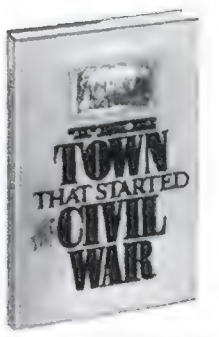

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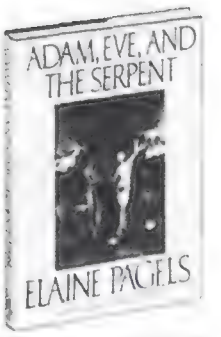

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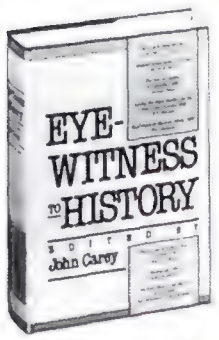

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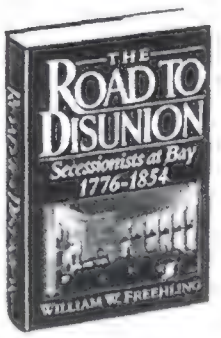

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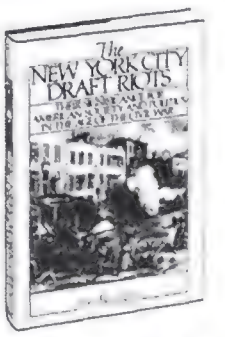

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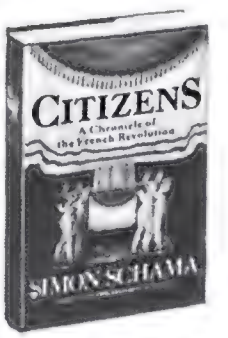

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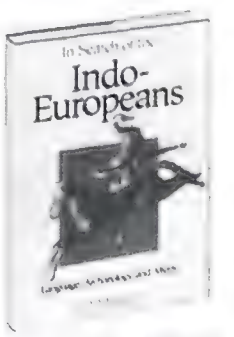

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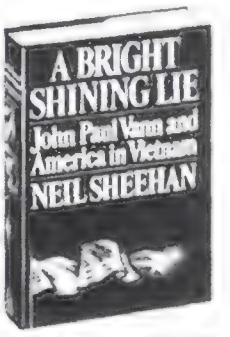

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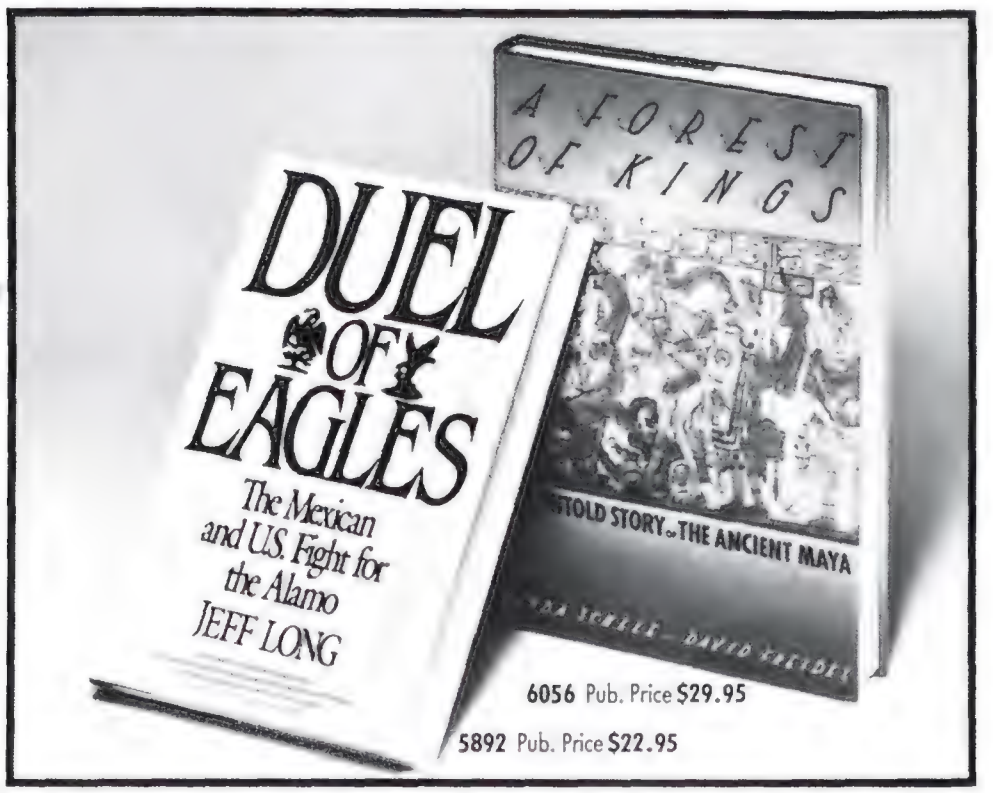

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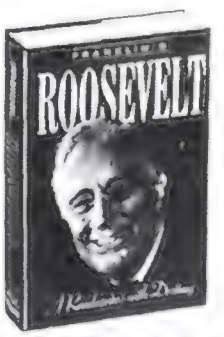

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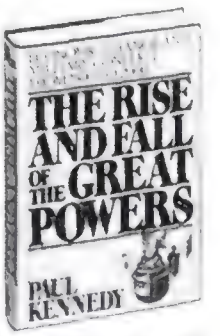

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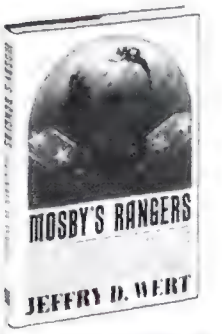

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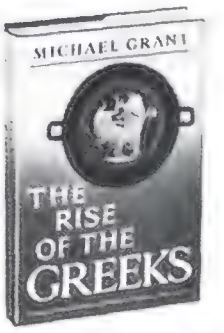

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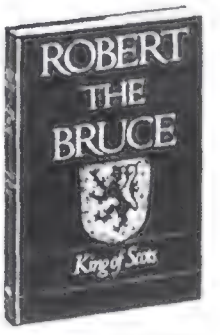

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Phenomena, comment and notes

Finesse rather than brute force may be the best way to deal with that most elusive of our resources: time

Every January 1, like the ne'er-do-well children of a wealthy family, we are presented with a handsome sum (more than half a million) which is ours to spend during the next 12 months. Each of us is given, not the dollars we fantasize about, but 525,600 minutes with which to build a life. We do think about it like money sometimes—we speak of spending more time doing this or that. But much of the time we don't think about it at all.

Time is like money in other ways. At least for those of us of a certain age, inflation is working its dark magic: minutes (or hours, or days) are not what they once were. They lose their value. Time goes by faster and faster, days blur, season tumbles after season. In the tidy microworld of physics textbooks, time slows down for objects moving at relativistic velocities. In our messier macroworld, Einstein's equations do not hold: the faster we go, the faster time goes.

We can compensate by trying to do things faster, by cramming more into the same space. Some do this extraordinarily well. A defensive back in the National Football League can change direction (at top speed) three or four times in the second or two it would take me to 1) realize that the person coming at me has turned to his left and 2) send electrical impulses down my potholed neurons telling my legs to push me off to the right. Just watching them warm up before a game, backing up in quick little side-to-side jumps, makes a person realize how ponderous the rest of us really are.

Animals get even more out of a second. Consider a dragonfly darting, stopping, changing direction, as it hunts over a pond. One of its seconds must be longer than one of ours. Experiments leave no doubt that a second must seem longer for a pigeon, for example, than for a person. One researcher taught a group of pigeons that a flashing light meant food was available, while a steady light meant no food. He would then increase the tempo of the flashing to see how fast it had to go before the birds could no longer distinguish flashes. Long after the human eye would see a steady light, it turned out, pigeons are still able to see the flashing.

We try to take a page from those defensive backs and train ourselves to move more quickly, to be able to do more in a minute or an hour. We walk faster, talk faster; in our cars many otherwise calm people become Type A personalities, furiously impatient at the slightest delay. This kind of hurriedness is not only an intuitive perception, as we watch our fellow citizens surge along sidewalks, it can be measured. Robert V. Levine, a professor of psychology at California State University at Fresno, has done that, comparing America with other cultures and also comparing different regions of the United States. He summarized the results in the September-October issue of *American Scientist.* To compare countries, he and his associates measured how fast pedestrians walk on downtown streets, how long it takes postal clerks to fill a request, and how accurate bank clocks are. Of the six countries he studied, the pace of public life was fastest in Japan, followed by the United States, England, Taiwan, Italy and Indonesia. In each country, the pace in larger cities was faster than that in smaller ones; this difference was most pronounced in the least-developed countries.

In 36 cities in the United States, Levine and his colleagues used four measurements: walking speed, talking speed, the time taken for a simple bank transaction, and the percentage of people wearing a wristwatch (a measure of their time consciousness). Boston, rather than New York, turned out to be the fastest-paced city of those studied; Los Angeles was the slowest. Chicago falls in the middle, while Salt Lake City is right behind New York. The Why? is

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more difficult; Levine speculates that fast environments attract Type A people while slower, Type B, people tend to flee fast-paced cities.

The researchers went on to compare these results with the statistics for heart disease in the 36 cities and found a correlation between pace and disease even stronger than that between Type A behavior and heart disease in individuals. (The latter correlation is being refined. Many researchers now believe that it is not Type A behavior per se that leads to heart attacks but the degree of hostility involved.)

Levine then goes a further step. Cigarette smoking, a major risk factor for heart disease, shows the same regional pattern as do heart disease and a fast pace. Smoking, Levine says, is often related to psychological stress. One possibility is that stressful, time-pressured environments lead to unhealthy behaviors such as cigarette smoking and poor eating habits, he continues.

This is the straight stuff, complete with sentences such as "Our model of the fast-paced 'type-A city' may provide a basis for examining this hypothesis." But there is more to life than models, and as I read Levine I kept turning to a small book (written short, the author notes, to save the reader time) by Jean-Louis Servan-Schreiber, a French journalist, called *The Art of Time*. He talks about life at a fast pace, too, but with a different perspective: "For a long time I admired men in a hurry. Until I realized that they were merely under stress. *What I fear most about stress is not that it kills, but that it prevents one from savoring life.*"

Servan-Schreiber divides time in ways that textbooks don't. He begins with nature, "cosmic time" counted in years since the Big Bang or, on a more modest scale, the days and years we experience on our planet. "This time doesn't give a damn whether the planet has life on it," he says.

Then there is society's time, imposed on us from the outside, "made up of interlocking codes and practices ... omnipresent in our existence." Unless we understand the rules and management of social time, Servan-Schreiber says, we may be overwhelmed by it.

Finally, there is experienced time, better measured in terms of quality rather than quantity. Our perception of how fast time passes depends on what we are doing: it is one thing on our

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wedding night, another if our fingers are caught in the car door. Experienced time occurs when we are able to stop worrying about the past and the future long enough to live for a moment in the present, to feel and think and savor. It is this kind of time we feel lacking in our lives, Servan-Schreiber writes: ". . . to some it is merely a memory."

It is experienced time that produces the sensation that time moves faster as we grow older. Servan-Schreiber compares life to a vacation. For the first couple of days at the cottage, the two weeks stretch away before us and we feel we have time to do all the things we want to. By the middle of the second week the end of the vacation is well above the horizon, and we know that there is not enough time to do it all, no matter how much we pack into the last days. Just so, of course, there comes a point in a life when death rises above the time horizon, and we realize that we do not have an infinite number of days to spend as we wish. Supposedly it is this realization that leads to the infamous "midlife crisis." I've been going through mine for 15 years, now.

Servan-Schreiber describes how he learned the hard way to give time to time, to plan for a day or a decade, to treat the appointments he makes with himself as seriously as those he makes with other people. But it is not so much a how-to as an inspirational book, promising that there is a way to trade stress for serenity, even in the busiest lives. He struck too close to home when he asked: "How then does it happen that . . . Jill arrives on time, completes her work on schedule and appears relaxed while Jack runs after the minutes, misses his plane, and always finds reasons for procrastinating?" (When he talked about a disordered desk sucking all the energy out of a person, I wondered if he had been lurking about up here on the third floor of the Arts and Industries Building.)

He promises we all can learn to handle time like a martial arts master turning aside an attack with elegant economy of motion, like a virtuoso who no longer has to think about the bowing as he plays the violin. He offers the dream of a life so well organized that when old friends unexpectedly call from the airport to say they are in town overnight, it is possible with no stress at all to drop everything, join them for dinner and get them back to the airport next morning.

The book is laced with aphorisms, many of which I found myself quoting over the telephone to family and friends. He frequently compares time to money, as in "We think much more about the use of our money, which is renewable, than we do about the use of our time, which is irreplaceable." Or, "It is wiser to hand over our checkbook to someone else than to hand over our datebook."

Pointing out that everyone in the world has exactly the same amount of time, he asserts: "The paradox of time is that people rarely consider they have enough when in fact all of it is available to everyone."

My favorite comes in a section in which he is describing how many of us have settled into an unthinking routine: "Most of our work we do on automatic pilot. This represents progress in an airplane but not in us."

His clinching proof that any of us can "make" more time when we want to is prototypically Gallic: ". . . I venture to say you have probably been in love. A little, a lot, in any case enough so that, suddenly, in a life that was already full, you found youself making long telephone calls several times a day, dreaming of the image of the other person, walking together aimlessly through the streets, leaving work early. So where did you find the time to do all that?"

After all this reading, and a modicum of reflection, I suddenly see how easy it is to seize more of those half-million minutes for myself, how to get more out of life, how to do all the things that until now I've only dreamed of. The secret, it turns out, is. . . Oops, the production manager has appeared in the doorway. I'm out of time. Terribly sorry about that.

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"I'll turn off the lungs. That'll make it easier," says Rich Holloway. For five minutes now, I've been trying to spear a large yellow lung tumor with a glowing beam of gamma rays, but I keep missing. When I get too close, my head gets tangled up in bronchial tubes, which is disorienting. And I'm not used to handling gamma rays in the first place.

The beam, lungs and tumor are all figments of a nearby computer's imagination. The objects are actually pictures on two tiny TV sets inside a pair of goggles I'm wearing, one picture for each eye. The goggles completely block my view of the room I'm stumbling around in—a small computer graphics lab at the University of North Carolina—and substitute in its place a wraparound, three-dimensional scene that the computer is busily devising (p. 38). In my goggles, the radiation beam is a thick yellow shaft that seems to be zooming in from just over my left shoulder and passing through the torso floating several feet in front of me.

Pictures you can walk around in

The reason I'm stumbling around, not sitting safely in a chair, is that the system does something even niftier than make 3-D pictures: it gives me the illusion that I'm walking around inside them. The goggles contain a magnetic sensor whose precise position a small box on the side of the room is tracking. Every time I move my head, the tracker alerts the computer, which, in turn, changes the scene I see in the goggles. When I turn my head to the left, the computer-generated scene shifts accordingly. When I take a step forward, the imaginary internal organs in front of me grow in size. I can walk all the way around the "virtual patient," examining the tumor and surrounding organs from any angle. The college-educated part of my brain is telling me these objects don't really exist. The video-game-playing part is telling me of course they do and why can't I just step up and grab that beam?

Radiation planning is one of the trickiest and most laborious parts of cancer treatment. Doctors try to position beams so they will converge on a tumor like spotlights on a singer. To do this they study x-ray films, examining shadowy 2-D images of a patient's tumor to divine the maddeningly complex 3-D interplay of radiation beams and body parts. Calculating the effect of a proposed configuration of beams now takes a large computer up to a half-hour, since each beam changes as it passes through the body. UNC's tumor-spearing program, being created by graduate student Jim Chung, will incorporate computerized scans of a patient's anatomy to let doctors move the proposed beams around by hand and see—instantly and in 3-D—how well they will work.

To interact with the scene in my goggles, I'm grip-

Photographs by Peter Menzel

In his goggles, University of North Carolina student Jim Chung sees lungs, tumor and gamma-ray beams, all "virtual," or simulated. By moving the red ball, he can target beams and quickly see which configuration will produce the optimal effect.

ping a real-life pool ball that the UNC researchers have hollowed out and stuffed with electronics. As I move the 3-ball around the lab, I see a cartoon version of it flitting about in the same way in my goggles. I'm supposed to use this as a sort of 3-D pointer to drag the imaginary beam around. Rich Holloway, a graduate student and my guide for the afternoon, has been patiently watching a video monitor that displays my left eye's view, and offering advice like, "Stick your nose right in there." Finally, he takes over. Strapping on the goggles, he takes a few steps, moves the 3-ball to a spot in front of his forehead. Then he swivels to one side with a quick two-step, squats and tilts his head. He looks like a mime in scuba gear. On the TV monitor I see he's just pulled the imaginary beam to where he wants it and is now sighting down its long hollow interior; the simulated tumor is dead center. Holloway quickly positions a second beam. On the monitor, the tumor is now impaled in two directions. "I'd say that sucker should be dead," Holloway announces from behind the goggles.

Zapping tumors is just one of a wide range of chores that researchers hope to accomplish more easily with the help of an emerging technology known variously as virtual reality, artificial reality, cyberspace or telepresence. Whatever the name, it involves three things: sensors to track your body's movements; sophisticated computers and optics to deliver a full-color, full-motion, three-dimensional scene to your eyes; and the ability to explore and change the imaginary landscape. The point of all these tricks, say the virtual-reality folks, is immersion. Virtual worlds aren't pictures, they're places. You don't observe them, you experience them. And one experience is worth a trillion bits, says William Bricken of the Human Interface Technology Lab (HITL) at the University of Washington. "Virtual reality eliminates the separation between you and the computer," Bricken explains. "You are not 'interfacing' with a virtual reality. You are included *within* it."

A wraparound experience of this sort is ideal for a scientist trying to make sense of huge and complex mountains of computer-generated data. A meteorologist, instead of wading through stacks of computer printouts and weather charts, could use a special command to "fly" up over a 3-D video image of North America, then swoop down to a particular storm system; the closer he flew, the more detail the computer would send to the goggles. Virtual reality would also be handy for designers of all kinds, letting them sit in an unbuilt sports car or stroll through an unbuilt office building (provided all the design details had been entered into the computer's memory beforehand). And as a training tool virtual reality could serve as a simulator-of-all-trades—virtual cars for driver ed classes, virtual cadavers for medical students. And, yes, it will no doubt lead to fabulous video games.

A fledgling industry based in the San Francisco Bay Area is already gearing up to put virtual-reality equipment in the hands of whoever wants it. Leading the charge is Autodesk Inc. in Sausalito. The company

Doug Stewart wrote about micromachines last November and billboard painters last September.

began its virtual-reality operations, dubbed the Cyberspace Project, in 1988. (The word "cyberspace" was coined by science fiction writer William Gibson in *Neuromancer* to describe a fantasy world that billions of Earthlings visited daily as part of a "consensual hallucination," thanks not to goggles but to electrodes.) The head of the Cyberspace Project is a former robotics expert named Randal Walser.

Walser is an intense individual. Sitting in his harborside office, his mournful, deepset eyes almost entirely hidden in shadow, he speaks softly and urgently about the wonders of cyberspace, like a magician warming up his audience. "It's all about illusion," he says quietly. "We're building imaginary worlds, and we're helping put people in them." Cyberspace is not an end in itself, Walser emphasizes, but a medium like print or film. He calls the artists who will craft specific virtual worlds "spacemakers." Unlike a filmmaker's art, the spacemaker's is open-ended—each experience depends on how a person chooses to navigate a particular imaginary world. Imagine schoolchildren entering cyberspace to orbit a virtual sun instead of reading about it in a textbook, he suggests. Or, why not scamper through the underbrush of a Mesozoic swamp to watch virtual dinosaurs behave the way scholars believe they did? "You could have a body that's in human form, but why limit yourself?" Walser asks, leaning forward on his elbows. "Why not be a pterodactyl?"

Goggled-out by too much cyberspace?

Advocates like Walser also see virtual worlds as gathering places. With a fiber-optic link, fitness buffs in different cities could play virtual racquetball on the same virtual court. Each player would be dashing about a different empty room in the physical world, but they'd see the same imaginary ball as they took turns swatting it. Autodesk has already tried out a rudimentary version of this, using tape-recorded *thwock*s to make up for the fact that you can't feel the ball when you hit it. "When you hear the ball bounce, you could swear you really hit it," Walser says. To create a believable illusion, he notes, you need only provide a few well-chosen cues; the brain fills in the rest.

"We're talking about a whole new universe. People will enter cyberspace to work, to play, to exercise, to be entertained. They will enter it when they wake up in the morning and will have no reason to leave it until the end of the day." Walser concedes he's never spent more than an hour at a time in cyberspace, but he dismisses alarmist talk that a person might become goggled-out by too much strapped-on computer animation, reduced to one of *Neuromancer*'s burned-out cyberpunks. "Chris Allis spends a lot of time in cyberspace," Walser says, "and he's still quite normal."

Chris Allis is a wiry, deadpan 30-year-old with a ponytail and black-and-red sneakers who handles many of Autodesk's demonstrations. In a windowless room down the hall, known affectionately as Cyberia, I follow along on a huge video monitor as Allis wanders through a cartoonlike virtual office. In addition to goggles, Allis is wearing a single black spandex glove covered with optic fibers for tracking purposes. He cocks his head, makes a fist, then swivels carefully on the ball of one foot as if practicing t'ai chi. On the TV monitor, I notice he's just picked up a pink virtual office chair and moved it. As Allis explores the virtual room, his disembodied virtual hand, complete with bendable finger joints, darts about the space. The computer to which the goggles and glove are attached by cables is programmed to read particular hand gestures. Pointing a finger means "fly," relaxing the hand means "stop" and so on. From behind his goggles, Allis explains that flying isn't simply a gimmick. When you travel on foot through a virtual world, you risk not

At UNC, church members were able to "walk through" their new building well before groundbreaking.

Able-bodied Chris Allis of Autodesk might play virtual racquetball with a disabled partner. He would move about the video court by actually running; with only hand gestures, his partner could easily keep up.

only barking your shins on an unseen chair in the room you're actually in but also wandering out of range of the magnetic tracker. And, to be sure, it would be tiring to explore 15 virtual shopping malls on foot.

Allis hands me the gear, and I jump into cyberspace. At first, the view is only a blur. Allis suggests I get my head out of the floor by pointing a finger upward. I do so and ascend like an elevator. I bury my video fingers in an imaginary book on a shelf and make a fist—the "grab" gesture. When I pull my hand back, I watch the book come along with the hand that I see in my goggles. I open my hand, and the book falls through the virtual desk and lands on the virtual floor. The floor, Allis explains, has been defined as a hard surface; the desk hasn't yet. The 3-D scenery is crude and flat, and the motion is jerky as the computer labors to recalculate the scene each time I move my head, but the illusion is total. I'm in another world. I ask Allis if the hundreds of hours he's logged in cyberspace have changed his experience of the physical world. "The experience of flying is something I know now," he says as matter-of-factly as if he were discussing a computer algorithm. "When I'm standing on a sidewalk now, I can visualize the ground dropping away below me."

For the eager cybernaut with a yen for flight, an excellent place to indulge is NASA's Ames Research Center down the Bay near Mountain View. There, Michael McGreevy, head of NASA's Virtual Environment Research Lab, lets me rocket through the Valles Marineris of Mars at what would be treetop level if Mars had any trees. Again, I wear 3-D goggles, but this time I maneuver using an oversize joystick instead of a glove or a pool ball. Looking side to side as I "fly" through the canyon, I see deep, red video ravines and steep, buff cliffs. The scenery is unnaturally smooth, and my maneuvers occur sluggishly, which undercuts the illusion of flight. But offsetting these drawbacks is my awareness that this isn't a generic computer-drawn valley: this is the real Valles Marineris as surveyed by Viking orbiters. Still behind goggles, I attempt a soft landing on the canyon floor but find myself tilting out of control. I ask McGreevy if I'll crash and burn on impact. "It'll just be a virtual fire," he assures me.

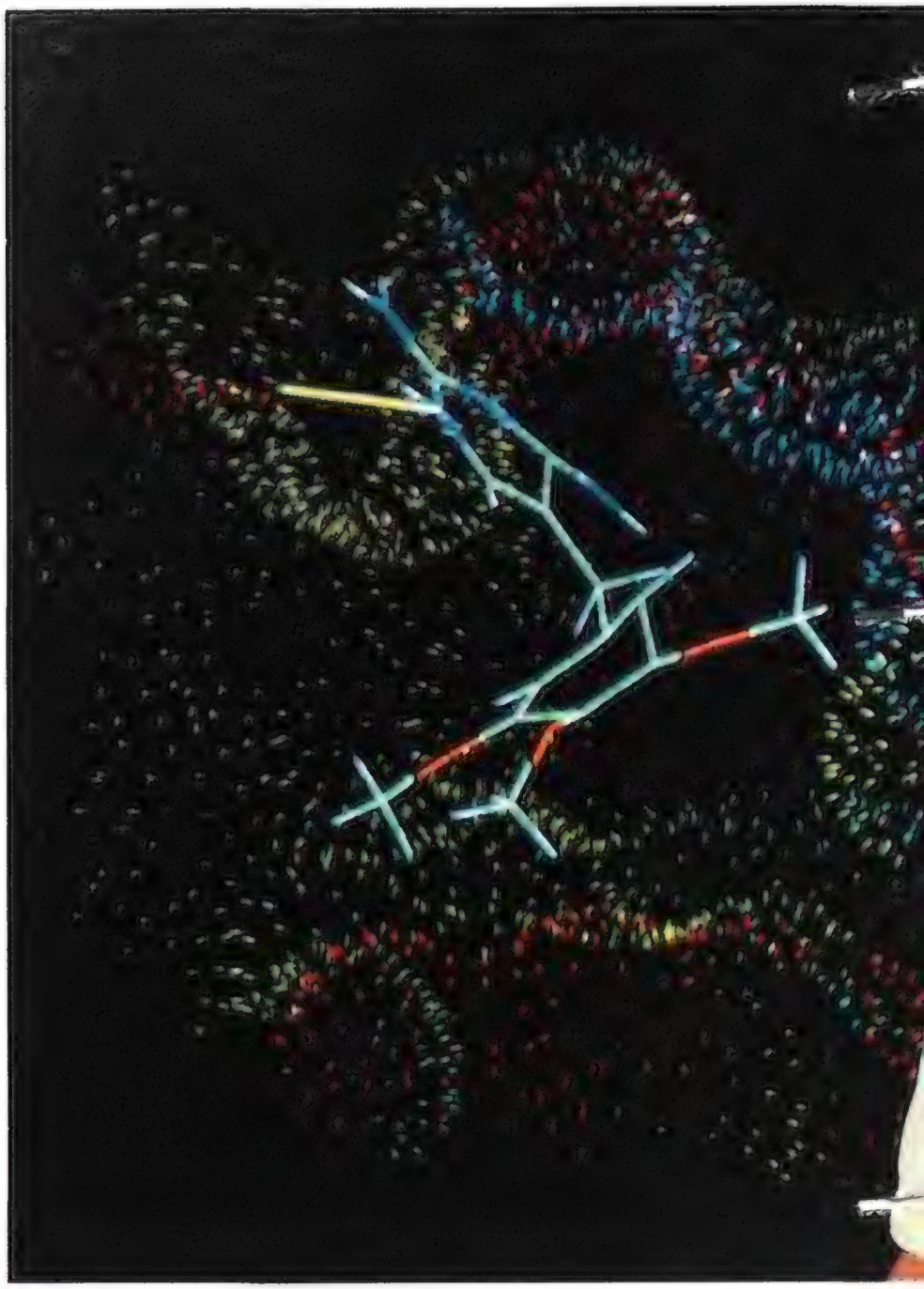
NASA didn't put Martian terrain into virtual reality just for kicks, of course. The purpose is to find new ways to visualize the information that planetary probes

Air traffic controllers find 2-D green screens hard to use. The glasses here mimic 3-D ones being created at the University of Washington; user will reach into the virtual airspace and "move" planes around by hand.

send back to Earth. NASA calls this telepresence: using virtual reality to place you within remote scenes. "Instead of being like TV, which is a window you look through," says McGreevy, "this is like a door. You walk through the door, and you're *there*." During manned expeditions, a goggled-up astronaut-geologist sitting safely inside a Mars base could see exactly what an automated rover's video camera sees 200 miles away. The geologist could decide at a glance which rocks the rover's robot arm should crack open in a search for fossils—something an "intelligent" computer may never be able to do.

While astronauts are used to being encrusted in alien costumes, most people are not. One of the biggest obstacles keeping virtual reality from catching on as an all-purpose tool for scientists and fantasists alike is the expensive and thoroughly cumbersome gear one has to wear. Among the alternatives being discussed: desktop binocular viewing ports that you would peek into as needed, and office-size fields of electric-eye-type light beams that would read gestures made with bare hands and change the scene accordingly. Myron Krueger, the man who coined the oxymoron "artifical reality" for the title of a 1983 book, has created an installation called Video Place at Connecticut's State Museum of Natural History, in Storrs. There visitors contort themselves in front of a huge backlit screen (p. 45) and see their bodies in outline on a nearby video screen. A computer studies the moving silhouette and reacts to certain gestures. A pointing finger on the screen appears to be shooting bullets; splayed fingers erase them. In "Superman" mode, people stretch their hands overhead and watch their video silhouettes fly away in the direction they're pointing. Krueger, a former computer science professor, suggests that someday parents on trips will call home and "play" with children on the screen: "A child could be large and a parent small. The child could pick the father up and drop him with one hand, then catch him with the other." In offices, Krueger predicts, workers will shuffle virtual pages with their hands as if they were sorting through real sheets of paper.

At the University of Washington's HITL, Tom Furness is exploring the idea of people using their hands to sort through airplanes rather than pages (above). "We want to submerge the air traffic controller within



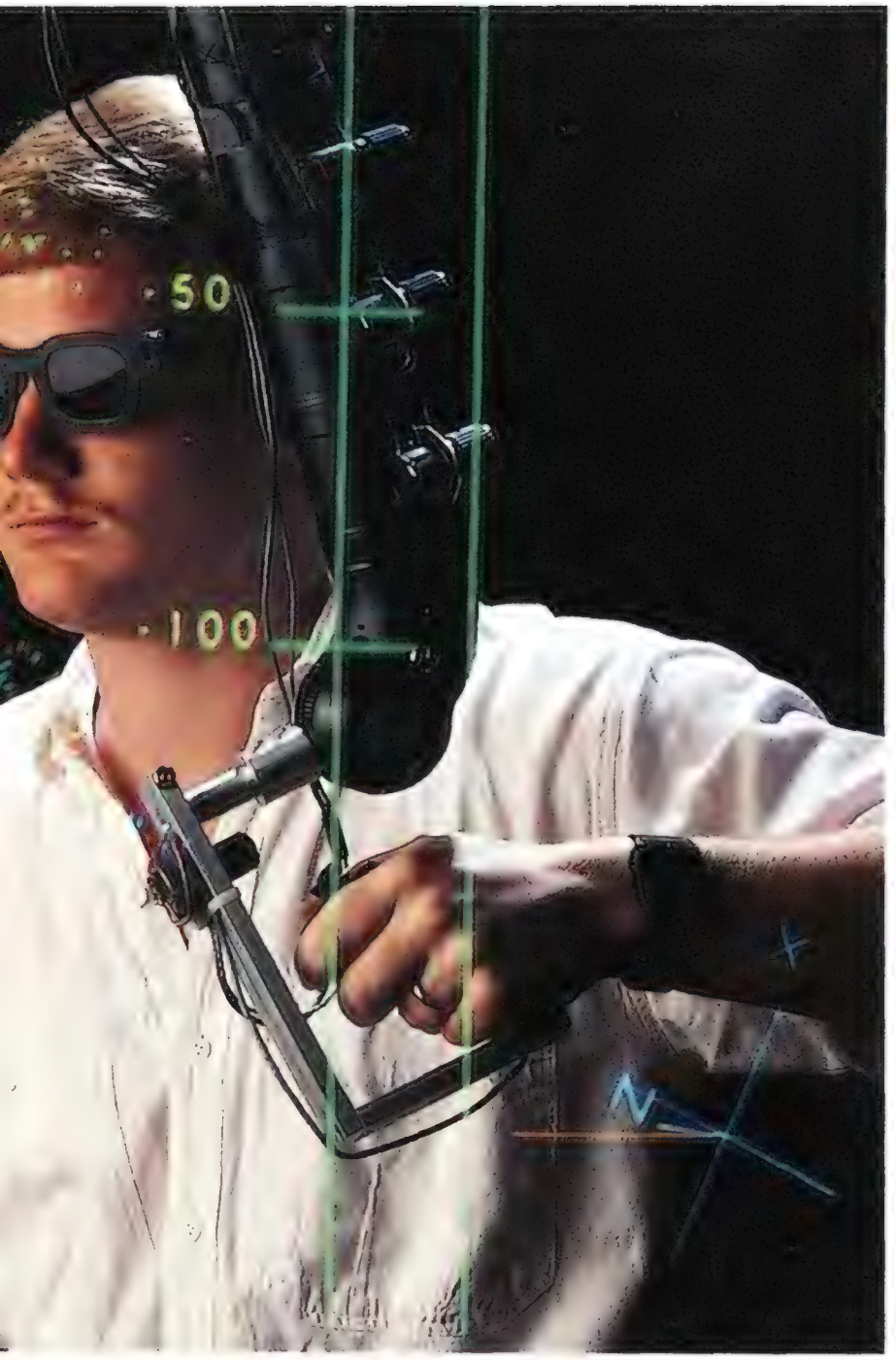
When viewed with 3-D glasses, molecular models help biochemists visualize how well drugs will work.

a scene where virtual objects are flying around his head," he says. "To talk to a particular pilot, he'd reach over and touch the plane with his glove, and radio contact would be established instantly." Furness, who built head-mounted displays for fighter pilots while working for the Air Force, expects today's bulky headgear will shrink in a few years to the size of ski goggles. By decade's end, he thinks, full-motion laser imagery as sharp as a photograph will be projected directly onto a person's retina, doing away with display screens altogether. The better the simulation, Furness says, the more absorbing the experience. He's looking forward to televirtuality, a future where elderly shut-ins will don the latest virtual-reality gear and shop together electronically at virtual malls; handicapped people will tour inaccessible locales and compete at sports with able-bodied friends. The healthy player will run; the handicapped player will "fly."

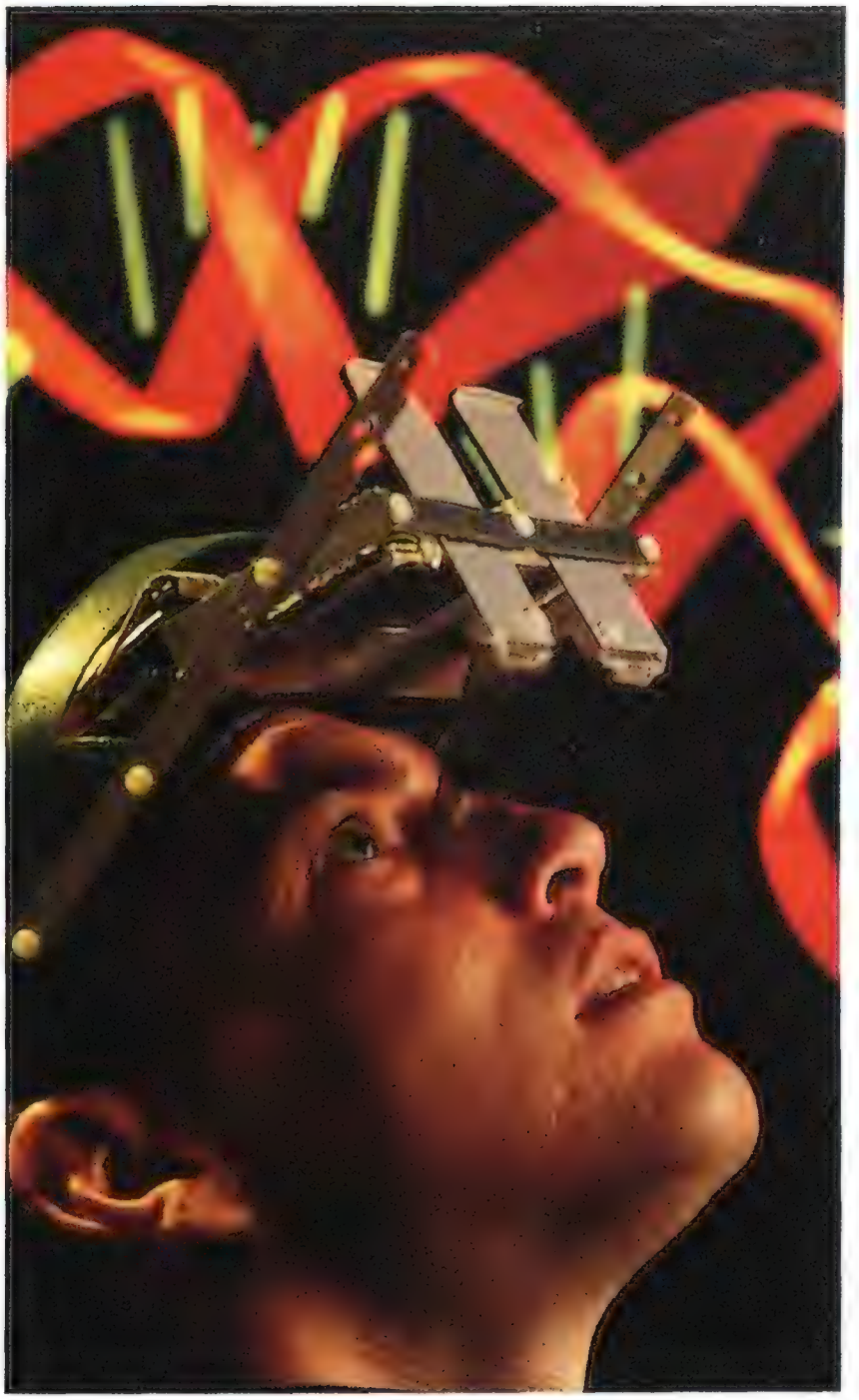
Not that virtual activities can't be strenuous. Vivian Cody, an x-ray crystallographer at the Medical Foundation of Buffalo, recently spent the better part of four days in a virtual world that forced her to push rather than point. "By the end," she recalls, "one arm felt as if I'd been playing tennis all week." The contraption she used was another of UNC's virtual-reality simulations, a molecular-graphics system (above). Cody designs drugs that kill dangerous cells in the body by smothering their vital enzymes. She does this by tailor-making drugs whose molecular twists and electric charges complement those of the enzyme molecule's receptor sites, atom for atom, so as to plug up the enzyme. Even with exact 3-D models that can be moved around on a video screen, biochemists like Cody have trouble predicting, just by looking, what will work as a plug and what won't. Another sense is needed.

In a corner of UNC's dimly lit computer graphics lab, a sinister metal arm resembling a huge outboard motor descends from the ceiling, ending at chest level. Where the propeller would be is a pistol grip. Behind it is a video screen. Bill Wright, the system's director, hands me a pair of 3-D glasses and leads me to the pistol grip. Its black paint, I notice, has been worn away by many a sweaty palm before mine. "Try it without the force feedback first," Wright says. On the screen, I see twisted stick models of an enormous molecule and a somewhat smaller molecule—parts of an enzyme and a drug. When I lift and rotate the grip, the drug molecule on the screen rises and swivels accordingly. "Try to make that green bar as short as possible," Wright advises. The green bar along one edge of the screen is the computer's near-instantaneous reckoning of how the two molecules are attracting or repelling in any given position. Judging by the green bar as I blunder around, mostly they're repelling. The interplay of the two molecules is too chaotic for my brain to put in order. As a video game, it stinks.

Then I step on the pedal that turns on the force



With force-feedback grip created by UNC scientists, the buck and tug of atomic forces can literally be felt.



Headset with see-through mirrors, tiny TVs, overlays video view onto real one for UNC's Warren Robinett.

feedback, and the pistol grip dangling from the ceiling begins thrashing like a marionette on steroids. After grabbing hold, I can literally feel the molecules buck and tug, thanks to a motor controlling the grip. Obviously, these are not likely docking sites I'm nosing around. Within seconds, however, the green line drops appreciably. Chaos recedes. I gain the distinct impression that I'm holding a molecule directly in my hand, albeit a toaster-size one. I can feel its atomic forces and can judge what it tends to do and what it prefers to avoid. Within a minute, the word "goal" flashes on the screen. "That means you've found a position where the drug would, in nature, dock and stay docked," says Wright.

UNC researchers have added sound to some of their other simulations and have even discussed the possibility of adding smell to enhance the illusion of "being there." Smell-generators pose a number of technical hurdles, however, and there are the funding agencies to worry about. "The Office of Naval Research might freak out if they found out we were planning smell-vision," Warren Robinett muses. Robinett, who holds the distinction of having worked for both NASA and the Atari games company, manages UNC's head-mounted display project. It was Robinett who invented the one-finger "fly" gesture now universal among virtual realists. He recently devised a scaling command: with a gesture, you shrink the virtual landscape around you to half its size every two seconds. The effect, if you stay up and out of the way as your virtual world shrinks, is to feel that you're accelerating upward. "In 10 seconds, the world is one thirty-second of its real size. In 40 seconds"—he pauses to work the numbers in his head—"the Earth is a ball with a 38-meter circumference. That's a comfortable size to step from here to MIT," assuming, he adds, you had a global model in your data base. A second command could scale you back down. "But not any whichway," says Robinett. "You'd point where you want the center of expansion to be, and you'd steer your hand around as

Fifty sensors, 300 feet of fiber-optic cable, in VPL's DataSuit allow full-body immersion into virtual worlds.

you look for virtual landmarks on your way down." The same procedure could help you navigate any kind of complex virtual world, whether realistic (a planet's terrain) or abstract (a "forest" of Census data).

Robinett shows me an experimental helmet with see-through mirrors over each eye and tiny TVs above them. As a result, the TV images are superimposed over what the viewer is seeing in the actual world (p. 43). Imagine coupling such headgear, Robinett says, with an ultrasound scanner. An obstetrician could look at a pregnant woman's abdomen and see a 3-D image of her baby curled up in place. "It would be like shining a little x-ray flashlight around inside her belly." The UNC researchers routinely refer to this as x-ray vision. Robinett, a comic-book fan who once designed a video game in which cars drove around a maze while firing missiles, makes no apologies for virtual reality's undeniably gamelike qualities. All the kids who've poured billions of dollars in quarters into video-arcade games in the past 20 years, he argues, have instinctively understood the power of good interactive graphics. The scientific world is only now learning what they knew all along. Moreover, Robinett says mildly, "I'm not opposed to things that are fun."

Neither, certainly, is Jaron Lanier. Lanier is the media darling of the virtual-reality movement, an accomplished musician and video-game wizard given to breezy pronouncements such as, "External reality is sort of an affectation of the nervous system." The small Bay Area company he founded, VPL Research, markets the goggles and gloves that are standard apparel in the virtual-reality community (for $9,400 and $8,800, respectively), as well as an optional full-length DataSuit (ranging around $100,000) for total immersion. VPL's customers are a well-heeled elite, mostly corporate research labs and design groups. The top-of-the-line equipment costs a quarter of a million dollars per participant, most of that paying for computer power. It puts several people in the same simulation, although for now all you see of your partner is a hand or, if DataSuits (left) are worn, a "puppet."

Complete with multidirectional sound, the virtual worlds that Lanier and the other VPL spacemakers build are the best around. At VPL's Redwood City headquarters, I step into a detailed virtual sports car whose computer-generated doors, steering wheel, gearshift, rearview mirror and sun visors I can reach for and move realistically within the simulation, all by gesturing with my DataGlove; the car's dashboard clock shows the correct time. One of the less clearly useful virtual worlds I visit is a tall green room filled with such odd virtual objects as a floating keyhole I fly through to enter other worlds, and a bouncing ball called Munchkin that squeaks, "Come *on*, pick me up!" until I reach for it with my glove and "grab" it.

Lanier, a giggly, stocky 30-year-old with heavy-lidded eyes and full-length blond dreadlocks, taught himself to juggle by practicing with slow-motion virtual balls. "Virtual reality can give you a smoother approach to learning something that in the physical world you have to learn all at once," he says, tugging on a dreadlock in a Palo Alto café. Eventually, he predicts, gloves will contain arrays of small actuators in the palm and fingers. The actuators' movements would be synchronized with the virtual objects you see. "This allows you to reach out and feel objects with your skin that don't exist in the physical world," he says. Lanier's flamboyant predictions of a Brave New World of virtuality (always phrased in the present tense), where virtual friendships are common, creativity blossoms and life resembles an open-ended video game, have helped surround this still-embryonic technology with something resembling a cult of believers.

Touch feedback—and then virtual lovers?

Lanier and others in the field are constantly asked if virtual reality will someday become so alluring (perhaps peopled by virtual lovers, once touch feedback is perfected) that real life will seem not worth the time. A recent episode of the new *Star Trek* focused on a wimpish Enterprise crewmember who escaped daily into a 3-D fantasy world, there to thrash and humiliate his on-board enemies. Most virtual-reality veterans dismiss such scenarios. A computer simulation never comes close to the real thing, they say. And how rich can a fantasy world be without lovers who respond and enemies who fight back? As it happens, however, a group at Carnegie Mellon University is already exploring ways to automate dramatic action. The Oz Project

hopes to use interactive fiction and other techniques to give "deep structure" to virtual reality, with computer-generated characters and content that adapt to the actions of real-life participants in a story's plot. The aim, understandably, is not to promote virtual-reality addiction but to make the experience of virtual worlds more meaningful and more memorable.

Still, a synthetic world by any other name is just a synthetic world. The illusion of inhabiting a computer-made landscape may be a convincing one, but for many folks that will likely make the urge to get out fast that much stronger. The people who will most clearly benefit from steering themselves through artificial realities are those with real problems to solve, whether an oil engineer struggling to make sense of a flood of computerized geological data or a doctor with an "x-ray flashlight" exploring a sick patient's body. Even Jaron Lanier, who professes that virtual reality is good for "literally centuries of fun," readily admits that it will never replace the real thing. "The physical world is infinitely subtle," he says. There is always something new to see, some unexpected detail or texture or event to discover. He expects to continue to take his vacations in the physical world, not the virtual one. "A virtual Maui will never be as good as even the grungiest parts of the real Hoboken," he says with a laugh.

But of course, fantastic video games: at his Video Place, Myron Krueger dances before a backlit screen. Computer manipulates his outline so that it joins in the action, and a large TV displays the pas de deux.

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PRECISION CRAFTED PERFORMANCE

By Sue Hubbell

Polly Pry did not just report the news; she *made* it

She was a scrappy journalist who loved the dramatic moment and never let a little thing like objectivity spoil an entertaining story

The scene was straight out of *Brenda Starr*, the comic strip. It was January 13, 1900, and the place was the so-called Bucket of Blood, the joint office of Harry Heye Tammen and Frederick Gilmer Bonfils, owners and editors of the *Denver Post*, who were on the floor bleeding from gunshot wounds. The gun had been fired by William W. (Plug Hat) Anderson, a Denver attorney. Tammen had just called him a son of a bitch and a robber, possibly even a cheapskate and a liar. Plug Hat was evening the score. The fourth person in the office was the tall, strikingly beautiful, fearless woman reporter (a blonde, alas, not a redhead) known as Polly Pry. Her series of stories on Colorado prisons and Alferd Packer, a man she believed to have been wrongly jailed for murder (he was also accused of cannibalism), were the cause of the dustup. After her bosses fell to the floor, she called to the newsroom for help. No one came, so she covered Tammen with the swirls of her dress to protect him—never mind that he was bleeding all over its hem—and grabbed the barrel of Anderson's gun. The journalists cowering outside the office door heard him threaten to kill her.

"Go ahead," she said. "And then hang." Polly Pry *did* love the dramatic moment.

But Anderson didn't kill her. She lived to outrage others with her writing and to look down the barrel of a gun again. In the end Plug Hat Anderson walked out of the office and turned himself in to the police, saying, "Arrest me. . . . I just killed two snakes." He hadn't killed either editor. Tammen, in fact, was lively enough to object when the doctor dressing his wounds began to take off his shirt. "Don't cut it, damn it," he grouched. "It's silk."

At the time of that embroilment in her editors' office, Polly Pry was 43, a locally famous writer of flamboyant, investigative newspaper pieces. She was gorgeous, a witty conversationalist, a star of Denver society, and she was full of beans. Twenty-five years later she would be named in *Liberty* magazine as one of the most interesting women in America.

She was born Leonel Ross Campbell in 1857 on a plantation in Mississippi. Her parents, Mary and James Campbell, sent her to boarding school in St. Louis, a period of her life that she later characterized as "the silver years of laughter." Silver or no, in 1872, when Leonel was 15, she donned her first long dress, a black velvet, and climbed over the school walls to elope with George Anthony. Many of the details of her life are tantalizingly vague, and how she met Anthony and who he was are some of them. He was said to be "of the notable Kansas Anthonys." He took his bride to Mexico where he had a commission from a group of Boston bankers to build the Mexican Central Railroad.

Sometime later she described her honeymoon in this characteristically florid fashion:

> I was a bride of only a few days' standing when I arrived in El Paso . . . with my better half, who was an official of the Mexican Central Construction company and had been compelled to hurry back to his post. Rooms had been prepared for us at the hotel, but when that first hot night I was discovered, about midnight, seated, à la Turk, on the top of a center table, with the tears streaming down my cheeks and the whole place reeking with the suffocating odor of pennyroyal, of which I had used a quart, I was simply bundled into a carriage and taken over to the private car, where I lived for many long days before I could be persuaded to return to my rooms where the fleas had so completely routed me.

Leonel left Anthony after only a couple of years. What happened next remains a mystery. The story handed down—though not completely substantiated by facts and dates—is that following the breakup of her marriage she went to New York City, where she asked a family friend, John Cockerill, editor of the *New York World*, for a job. "Give you a job!" he is reported to have said, "I ought to spank you and send you back to your husband." But the youngster turned in such a good story about a fire that she established herself on the *World* and went on to become its Latin American correspondent, covering Panama when there was just talk of a canal. On the side she wrote pulp fiction, which was published by Street & Smith.

After the editors fell to the floor, Polly shielded one with her gown and grabbed the hot barrel of the pistol. The assailant next threatened to shoot her. "Go ahead," she replied defiantly. "And then hang."

Illustrations by Sal Catalano

By the time of her crusade to get Alferd Packer out of jail, Polly Pry was already well known in Denver.

Years later she would write about what she had learned in those days:

> The first time I ever interviewed a man they sent me out to ask a Bishop of the Greek church whether he had set fire to the church building and the Boys' Home, and nearly burned some score or so of little boys to death in their beds, stolen the church books and embezzled moneys put in his charge. I sat in the church parlors and watched the Bishop come down the stairs to be interviewed. He was a man six feet and a half tall. He wore a trailing black robe, a tall pointed cap, and his hair fell in shaggy curls to his waist. Also his beard. I didn't run. I stayed and asked him all about it. I didn't know any better.

An editor once advised her: "Tell the story as it is, and remember, on this paper you are not to have any veneration for anybody or anything except God—and—well you might temper that a little."

Her parents had moved to Denver, and visiting them there in 1898 she met Bonfils who, with Tammen, had taken over the *Denver Post* in 1895. He offered her a job to write as she pleased. She took it and, probably at the suggestion of Bonfils and Tammen, began calling herself Polly Pry. That pseudonym echoed the pen name Nellie Bly, which was used by Elizabeth Cochrane Seaman and made famous by her around-the-world story and exposé journalism. Polly Pry was equally footloose. She covered Colorado politics and reported firsthand from Moscow and points in between.

The *Post* was building its circulation on populism and opposition to authority, all authority. So after Polly Pry met Alferd (sometimes spelled Alfred) Packer in the course of writing a prison series, she and Bonfils and Tammen decided to crusade for his release. Packer had been convicted in 1883 of killing five prospectors he was guiding over a high plateau in Hinsdale County in southwestern Colorado. Packer eventually admitted to eating the men to save himself from starvation and to killing one in self-defense, but he denied having anything to do with the demise of the others. The judge in the case, a fiery Democrat, delivered what was said to be an eloquent hanging speech, full of classical allusions, but what has come down from it is the report of a spectator who, liberally juiced on "Taos Lightning," staggered into a nearby saloon where he called out: "Well boys . . . Packer's to hang. The Judge, God bless him! says, says he: 'Stand up, yah man-eatin' son of a bitch . . . They was siven Dimmycrats in Hinsdale County, but you, yah voracious . . . son of a bitch, yah et five of thim! I sintince ye t'be hanged by th' neck ontil y're dead, dead, dead; as a warnin' ag'in reducin' the Dimmycratic popalashun of th' State.' "

Packer's sentence was reduced to 40 years in prison on a technicality, but even that was unjust according to Polly Pry. (In 1989, a forensic scientist exhumed the five bodies and concluded that Packer had indeed killed and eaten his victims.) She wrote a series of columns citing cases of those convicted of murder and

Sue Hubbell shuttles between a home in Washington, D.C. and a farm in the Ozarks. Her article on truck stops appeared in the November 1989 issue.

rape who were given lesser sentences, and finished each one with "Why not Packer?" In early January 1900, she was approached by a hustler who was planning to open a tobacco stand and hoped to hire a free-and-famous Packer to run it. It was he who suggested Plug Hat Anderson as an attorney to bring about Packer's release. There is no report of what the hustler paid Anderson, but Polly Pry offered him $1,000 of *Post* money to take the job. He apparently accepted that and, misrepresenting matters, extracted from Packer all the money that the cannibal had earned in prison making hair ropes and bridles. And it was a quarrel over those latter funds that brought Anderson to the Bucket of Blood. The office of Bonfils and Tammen did not acquire that gruesome designation after they were shot there; it was already known as such because its walls were painted red—a color that matched the *Post*'s combative editorial style.

Packer was freed in 1901, about the time Anderson was being tried. During the proceedings, Tammen was charged with trying to buy the jury, and the litigation went on and on. At some point, a distinguished Denver attorney named Harry J. O'Bryan entered the case as amicus curiae, an adviser to the court, in which capacity he probably met Polly Pry. O'Bryan was a conspicuously fashionable man about town, dapper in a gray suit and white vest, with trouser creases so sharp that they received notice in the local press. Remember O'Bryan. He's plot material.

Polly takes a powder from the Post

Eventually Polly Pry's sense of property and aspirations of class affected her reporting and forced her into a clash with her employers as she began covering what might be called the Colorado Mining Wars—conflicts that have made Telluride and Cripple Creek infamous in the history of the American labor movement. The fortunes of great families, the Guggenheims, Rockefellers and Goulds, were built in part on the valuable ores that lay under the Colorado soil. In their extraction, greed and a sense of frontier freedom bred violence from both labor and capital. William (Big Bill) Haywood, who later helped found the Industrial Workers of the World and backed Eugene Debs as Socialist candidate for President, was radicalized in the Colorado Mining Wars. Mary Harris Jones, the radical labor organizer known as Mother Jones, spoke and inspired miners there as she did in Pennsylvania and West Virginia. In a disagreement over a story she had written about the president of a union, Polly Pry parted company with Bonfils and Tammen, who were more sympathetic to labor than she was.

Polly Pry believed in turning disappointment into triumph, so she started her own magazine, a weekly focusing on local and regional affairs. She named it after herself, *Polly Pry*. The first issue, dated September 5, 1903, shows her on the cover, an elegant woman with an hourglass figure in swirls of lace and a knock-'em-dead hat. It may have been one of the liveliest, most libelous, most outrageous magazines ever published. In it she would express her assorted social views: enduring opposition to anarchism, socialism and the municipal ownership of utilities, as well as to trade unionism. As she saw it, "The fruits of production belong to whoever has the brains and the money to put in force a plan or a business that will produce." She stood for feminism and women's suffrage.

She must have seen herself when she wrote about "a brainy woman who, when she found she had no vocation for wifehood and less call to fill the office of mother, tarried not . . . but went her happy unmolested way." She wrapped her social views in lively features and gossip. The latter is delicious to read when you have heard of its subjects:

They say Mr. William Jennings Bryan offered

Packer was convicted of manslaughter. He admitted to eating five people and killing one man in self-defense.

the fair Ruthy $25,000 and a three-years' trip to Europe if she would give up marrying the picture man. . . . The picture man is over twice Ruth Bryan's age, and they do whisper that he is rather a naughty thing in the Paris studio sort of way.

It is delicious to read even when you've *never* heard of them:

Everyone who knows Miss Lou Martin . . . will be glad to learn of her engagement to a Mr. W. K. Bender of New York. All the romantic tales which made Miss Martin out the heroine of a broken heart idyll will have finis written at the end of them at last. Miss Martin is the fortunate girl who had the narrow escape from one Edward Ellis Hamlin, who eloped with Mabelle Hite, the Telephone Girl.

Two winters ago Mrs. Brown hankered for culture, and sat the lights out at Carnegie Institute learning things. After that Japan. She has come back with "Darling of the Gods" writ large on her face and a Yoe San arrangement of coiffure that gives one the backache.

Glamorous and ambitious, Polly Pry became a star of Denver society as well as a goad to organized labor.

Senator Carey has cut son Bobby off [without] a shilling and all because he married Julia Freeman. . . . Now Bobby will have to work to support wifey and work overtime, too, for Julia has tastes not at all compatible with the love in a cottage idea. It's ten to one that she married Bobby Carey on a dare. Two seasons ago she set the staid society of Santa Fe on the ears when she went to visit her cousin, Governor Otero's wife. . . . She has a pair of brown orbs which simply make a man get busy. She introduced "Bridge" into Santa Fe and collected her earnings, which were plenty, and was paid in silk hosiery. So much toward the trousseau.

As for Judge Wilson—well, really. . . . He has a front piece like a fried doughnut and the magnetism of a deep sea clam.

Remember Harry J. O'Bryan? The dapper attorney? In the September 23, 1903, issue we read:

Mr. and Mrs. Harry J. O'Bryan have gone to New Mexico to settle some matters. . . . Mrs. O'Bryan was at one time the life of the Overland golf links but her numerous visits to the East and poor health lately have caused her friends to be robbed of her delightful company.

Polly Pry covered sports:

Denver University is going to give the Athletic Club a chase for their laurels this winter on the gridiron. . . . The biggest man on the eleven is Bert Martin, carrying 220 pounds as gracefully and as easily as a danseuse wears her duff-duffs.

Polly Pry covered culture:

His interpretation of the Brahms Mainacht was ludicrous and his German unmentionable, but the audience was goodnatured . . . and gave him a rousing encore.

Polly Pry covered the Colorado Mining Wars. In fact, the gossip and the sports and the culture served basically as a sort of gift wrapping for the magazine's main editorial product, which comprised much strident editorializing about events associated with the confrontation between miners and management. The editor was a staunch supporter of Gov. James H. Peabody, who ordered in a thousand troops paid for by the Mine Owners' Association. The troops were led by an ex-Rough Rider named Sherman Bell. One reply to the charge that his treatment of strikers might be unconstitutional was, "To hell with the Constitution! We aren't going by the Constitution. We are following the orders of Governor Peabody." Labor lost the Colorado Mining Wars and, although it's true that the

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When she opened the door, two bullets whizzed past. She accused the unions of trying to assassinate her.

militia and interunion rivalry had a lot to do with it, Polly Pry, with her hard-hitting stories and her version of the "truth," certainly aided and abetted the forces of property and capital.

No history of those strikes can be quite understood without reading *Polly Pry* and understanding how forcefully its editor tried to influence her contemporaries. She was relentless in her ad hominem attacks on strike leaders, but of particular note is her virulent opposition to Mother Jones. In a sense, the two women complemented each other. They were of the same time (Polly Pry, 1857-1938; Mother Jones, 1830-1930). Mother Jones was a college graduate who hid her culture. Polly Pry was a secondary school dropout who was more like those she derisively labeled "culturines" than she would care to admit. Mother Jones was pro-labor. Polly Pry was anti-labor. Both were independent at a time when women were often dependent. Both were outspoken women who bent the truth to accomplish their own ends. It was predictable that they should clash. When Mother Jones came to Colorado to help organize the miners, Polly Pry fulminated: "Were there not enough homegrown noxious fungi to poison the Colorado miner's . . . broth that foreign toadstools must be imported?"

Polly Pry had social connections to the rich and powerful and in some undisclosed way the Pinkerton files were opened to her to provide some grist for what became her most scandalous story. Today agents of the Pinkerton company (SMITHSONIAN, August 1981), whose private espionage service in the Civil War led to the establishment of the Secret Service, are security guards at banks, office buildings and other commercial establishments. At the turn of the century, they were routinely in the employ of corporations against strikers. It was from Pinkerton files that Polly Pry took the information that, in her issues of January 2 and 9, 1904, she said proved that Mother Jones had been both a prostitute and a "procuress," charges that she supported with dates, addresses and names. The story was widely reprinted and stuck to Mother Jones throughout her life and beyond it.

The question occurs as to whether Polly Pry was being supported by the Mine Owners' Association or by other wealthy, powerful patrons. But nothing in her papers, which are in the Western History Collection at the Denver Public Library, indicates that this might be the case. The papers are loosely organized, awaiting the future thesis or novel writer (whose book is to be liberally supplemented, please, by reprints of the woman's own writing—The Best of *Polly Pry*). Photographs and billets-doux (one from a woman) tumble out of file boxes together with subscription lists, newspaper clippings, scrapbooks filled with her stories. All the odd papers of a lifetime. There is a stock certificate for a Cripple Creek gold mine, but it must have been worthless or it would have been passed on to heirs. Most telling are her letters seeking funds for her many enterprises, the sad documentation of her scrappy, lifelong hustle for cash. There is even one odd passage in 1924 when she tried to act as a go-between in the sale of an extensive collection of European paintings to a buyer who would donate them to the Denver Art Museum, out of which she hoped to realize $22,000. ("I am paralyzed for lack of money," she wrote, and "Nothing is impossible today except happiness and that has always been a myth.") The sale never came off, according to the museum.

Fabulous prizes but no winners

The publication itself is full of promotional gimmickry, including what must be one of the most unusual come-ons in the history of magazine publishing. During April of 1904 *Polly Pry* offered to "send the boy who gets the greatest number of subscribers . . . to Harvard, Yale or Princeton . . . the girl . . . to Vassar, Smith or Wellesley." This included not only four years of tuition and transportation but a $10-a-week stipend to boot. There is no mention of winners, however, in any of the subsequent issues.

This followed a January 1904 assassination attempt on Polly Pry that some of her contemporaries suggested might have been staged in order to increase

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She interviewed Pancho Villa in Mexico and wrote that he was a cruel man but one "who laughs at death."

circulation of the magazine. She denied it and said that labor was trying to silence her. Whatever the motive, on the evening of January 10, she warily opened the door to her house on West Colfax Avenue (later razed and covered by the grass of Denver's Civic Center), standing behind the door as she did so, thereby avoiding the two .45-caliber bullets that whizzed past her and slammed into the wall and sofa. Her assailant, whom she did not see clearly, was never apprehended.

"What is my crime?" she asked in her magazine. From that point on, her prose began to take on a shriller, grandiose quality:

> Colorado is the chosen battleground for the greatest industrial war ever waged in America. I'm going to tell the truth about this war. . . . If I die in the telling of it—someone else will take my place.

So said Polly Pry in her January 23, 1904, issue, and the publication kept up the drumbeat until August 26, 1905, when the cover carried the announcement that there had been a change of management and that the magazine would, in the future, be issued as a "high class" weekly under the title of *The Saturday Sun*. "It will be sparkling, but [it will] not sting. It will be honest and fair, not vindictive." Notwithstanding all of that, it is uncertain whether a single issue of *The Saturday Sun* ever saw the light of day.

Leonel Ross Anthony dropped from view for the next few years. Among her papers, however, there is a 1907 letter addressed to her in Staten Island from a New York actress who was turning down a play that Polly Pry had written. There are a number of plays among her papers, all of them preachy, all of them bad. In 1910 she married lawyer Harry J. O'Bryan, he of the sharp trouser creases. There is no record of what the marriage meant to either of them, but in 1914, at the age of 57, she was sent by the *Denver Times* to look for Pancho Villa, the Mexican revolutionary, and on the eve of her departure she had word of O'Bryan's death in Oregon. That didn't stop her from entering into her new job as war correspondent with enthusiasm. Her reports contain some of her liveliest writing. When she eventually caught up with Villa, she wrote her impressions:

> Pancho Villa, illiterate, ignorant, arrogant, bloodthirsty and cruel, but a man who laughs at death, who knows no fear, who meets you with narrowed eyes of hatred and wide smile of friendliness and who must be reckoned with before peace is even thought of . . .

For a time after that, she wrote music and drama reviews for the *Times*. She tried to establish a theater, the Lakeside Casino, in Denver. Her usual problem, lack of funds, seems to have brought this enterprise to a close. (Among her papers there is a fussy letter from a printer demanding prepayment of his bill, perhaps because of a bad credit record.) In 1918 she wrangled a job with the American Red Cross and, from the London office, served in Albania and Greece writing press releases. In 1921, when she was 64, she applied for a job in Washington, D.C. with the U.S. Joint Committee on Reorganization. She did not get the job but stayed in Denver, where she spent her remaining years doing public relations work for the Red Cross and a livestock show, and hustling those European paintings. It was a long way from her glory days as Polly Pry, but as she had once written, "The woman who knows enough to earn a decent income for herself is very apt to have to earn it."

Leonel Ross Anthony O'Bryan died on July 16, 1938, at the age of 81 in a Denver hospital. Her final words, as she raised herself from the bed, were, "I must be up and . . . " Brenda Starr herself couldn't have said it any better.

Advancing age did nothing to diminish Polly Pry's beauty or her energy. She kept busy until she died.

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By Kenneth Turan

'They told me that Yiddish was a dead language'

A rescue operation in the United States for a million books helps to support a new demand in the old cultures of the Baltics

Students in Jewish school in Riga browse through a new batch of books in Yiddish, an unfamiliar language.

On a rainy night last July, a trio of Americans sat down in an Indonesian restaurant in Stockholm to hammer out the final details of an expedition to the Soviet Union, a trip that could be looked upon as one of the more misguided journeys since Lot's wife, heading out of Sodom, couldn't resist taking a last look back.

On the next day, the three of us (myself, photographer Janice Rubin and an energetic 35-year-old in wire-rimmed glasses named Aaron Lansky) were headed into the USSR to distribute 7,000 Yiddish books to schools and libraries across the Baltic republics of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. This despite the fact that Soviet anti-Semitism was growing ever more ominous, and that Jews were themselves abandoning the USSR and fleeing to Israel at a startling rate (estimated at 150,000 this year). As Lansky himself put it, "If they're all going one way, why are we driving in the opposite direction?"

Aaron Lansky has made something of a career out of turning conventional wisdom on its ear, starting with his decision, while still in college, to take an interest in the Yiddish language in the first place. A sophisticated, often misunderstood tongue, zesty, ebullient and fragile, Yiddish was not only the day-to-day language of a teeming secular Jewish culture in pre-Holocaust Eastern Europe, it has produced a rich and varied literature, including the work of Sholem Aleichem and Nobel Prize winner Isaac Bashevis Singer. A fusion language, Yiddish (which dates from sometime around 1000 A.D.) developed in Central and Eastern Europe out of unequal parts of German, Hebrew and the Slavic languages of Poland, Belorussia and the Ukraine, with a dollop of Romance tongues tossed into the mix. But though Yiddish has been spoken by more Jews than any other language in history, it has often been looked down upon, even among its own speakers, as not nearly as elegant or holy as Hebrew, the sister tongue with which it shares an alphabet.

Lansky, however, felt differently. "Up until the Second World War," he says, "80 percent of the world's Jews spoke Yiddish. If you want to know what it means to be a Jew, you have to know about it." But the language's native speakers were fast dwindling in number and the books they left behind were in danger of being abandoned or destroyed in large numbers. "As the grandparents died," he says, "the books were literally ending up in the trash cans." So, in 1979, he borrowed a suit from a friend and took the train to New York to propose to the leaders of the major Jewish organizations that they fund a group to rescue Yiddish books.

"They told me that Yiddish was a dead language, that there couldn't be more than 75,000 Yiddish books available for collection and besides, there was no point wasting time and money on a sinking ship," he remembers. Described by a friend as a combination of "a flower child and the most entrepreneurial spirit I have ever seen," Lansky was not daunted. Working with a government-surplus typewriter, he founded the National Yiddish Book Center in Amherst, Massachusetts, in 1980. He sent notices to synagogues and the Jewish

Project leader Aaron Lansky and Moshe Michelson share excitement over delivery of 1,000 books to library in Tartu, Estonia. Michelson had once taught Yiddish secretly; now, with *glasnost*, his lessons can resume.

Photographs by Janice Rubin

Two Latvian students take a closer look at the new language in a Yiddish folktale, *The Little Tailor.*

press, formed teams of volunteer collectors, or *zamlers,* and was invariably on the road himself, answering emergency calls. An example: "Some workers were renovating a building on 16th Street in Manhattan and came across an 8,000-volume Yiddish library. They didn't know what to do with it, so they just piled it into a dumpster on the street. A guy happened to walk by that evening and noticed it. He called a friend, she called me at midnight. We took a 2 A.M. train to New York and worked all day in a freezing rain to haul them out of there."

These days, Lansky's working conditions are not quite so spartan. For one thing, he and his *zamlers* have collected not 75,000 Yiddish books but a full million, necessitating both 25,000 square feet of storage space in a former paper factory in Holyoke and a modest headquarters in the Old East Street School in Amherst. Unable to pay anyone, including himself, for the first four years of the Center's existence, Lansky now has a full-time staff of ten and an annual budget of almost three-quarters of a million dollars.

Still without support from the Jewish Establishment, the Center is a grass-roots success, its work largely funded by its 10,000 dues-paying members. And Lansky has done more than gather the books; he has succeeded in placing them in libraries in some 20 countries, including Yale University (which was given 10,000 volumes), the University of Melbourne, Oxford University, and Jagiellonian University in Krakow, a track record that led to his winning a prestigious MacArthur Foundation grant last year.

From diverse places, a common demand

At about the same time Lansky received that grant, the Book Center began getting letters, in both Yiddish and English, from places in the Soviet Union as diverse as Moscow and Tartu, a small university town in Estonia. The common thread was a desire for Yiddish books. Now that the coming of *glasnost* had loosened the USSR's repressive bonds, Jews seemed eager to reclaim this part of their culture and to experience the language anew. All they needed, and what the Center had, was the books.

Excited at the thought of reintroducing Yiddish to the part of the world where so many of its original speakers had lived, Lansky was also precisely the kind of practical visionary needed. But short of an actual trip to the Soviet Union, there seemed to be no way to figure out if the letters were truly the first stirrings of a revival of a culture that had been immobilized like a Siberian mastodon by the severest of frosts, or merely a tip without an iceberg.

So, in November 1989, Lansky and I embarked on a preliminary fact-finding mission that lasted nearly a

Esther Rapina visits the site of old Jewish synagogue in Riga; it was torched by Nazis during World War II.

Principal Samuel Friedman unpacks cartons of Yiddish books as his new school library begins to take form.

month and took us to Moscow, Leningrad, Minsk and the Baltic capitals of Tallinn, Riga and Vilnius. In much of the Soviet Union, the news was not good. So many generations of Jews had grown up with absolutely no religious or cultural education that assimilation was nearly total. In Leningrad, for instance, we were told that though 100,000 Jews lived in the city, not one teacher of Yiddish could be found. And when, on a bitterly cold train platform in that city, we chanced upon a man who knew the language, he panicked when Lansky attempted to start a conversation. "Don't speak Yiddish, it's not safe," he said under his breath, horrified at Lansky's usual brio. Then, like a character in a Graham Greene novel, he took one last puff of his cigarette and quietly disappeared into the night train to Berlin.

The situation in the trio of Baltic republics, however, was much more encouraging. Both Vilnius and Riga, the capitals, respectively, of Lithuania and Latvia, had been great centers of sophisticated, secular Jewish culture, right up to the Soviet takeover of the Baltics in 1940. So, unlike the rest of the USSR, these countries still had people who believed passionately in the language's importance and had tenaciously fought for its survival. People like Estonia's Moshe Michelson.

A small man with an animated, remarkably unlined face surrounded by a halo of white hair, 75-year-old Michelson spoke a brisk, forceful Yiddish. In the late 1970s, he began to teach Yiddish clandestinely to a small group that gathered in his house in Tartu. But when one of the students informed on him, he realized that it had become too dangerous to go on.

The coming of *glasnost* changed all that: "For 40 years, we couldn't talk in Yiddish—they would have cut our tongues off," recalled Michelson. "But now it is different, and we want to reclaim what we have lost. We don't want handouts, we don't want millions, we only want that our children should be able to learn Yiddish and grow up as Jews." When Lansky told him how extensive the Center's holdings were, and how determined he was to help, Michelson began to weep. "You've killed me, stripped me naked," he said, emotion playing across his face. "God himself has sent you to us."

In Riga, we found Avrom Barmazel, an 87-year-old former professor at the pre-war Jewish Teachers Training Academy, who had prevailed upon his ex-students, now well into retirement age, to form the nucleus of the staff of state-supported, Jewish-oriented schools (taking students ages 6 to 16) that, in addition to the usual subjects, taught Yiddish and Hebrew.

In honor of our visit to the school, a group of fidgety, giggling girls sang Hanukkah songs in Yiddish, including one, "I Have A Little Dreidel," that I remembered with piercing clarity from my own childhood (a dreidel is a tiny spinning toy). That this language, after having been subjected to unprecedented decimation, should again be coming out of children's mouths literally blocks from the sites of mass killings was inexpressibly moving, and helped convince Lansky that we had to help. He recalled what a Riga teacher had told him: "Even if 100,000 Jews a year leave, it will take 15

The author, who is Book Editor of the Los Angeles Times, *came from a Yiddish-speaking home in the United States. His parents were from Belorussia.*

Host Avrom Barmazel toasts successful venture with author Turan (to his left), Aaron Lansky and a friend.

Barmazel's tiny apartment is crammed with books; he greeted those in new shipment like long-lost friends.

or 20 years, an entire generation, to get everyone out, and we can't afford to lose another generation. We have to give them a sense of who they are."

Back at the Center's headquarters in Massachusetts, the daunting amount of work necessary to make the book delivery a reality began on several fronts. Books had to be selected, money to fund the trip had to be raised, and the volumes had to be sorted and packed into government-surplus cardboard boxes, coded on the outside to indicate what school or library they were destined for. The logistics were complicated. They decided to send the books in two shipments. The first, a trial run of 1,000 books, was to be sent in early May to Tallinn, Estonia. The balance of 6,000 books was scheduled for shipment to Riga six weeks later; these would be distributed within Latvia and Lithuania. We would follow in mid-July. When the time came, the cartons were driven in the Book Center's truck to Port Elizabeth, New Jersey, where they were put into large containers and lifted aboard a freighter headed for points East.

How the books would actually get inside the Soviet Union had been a difficult problem. Originally, Lansky had intended for us to simply rent a truck, load it up and present ourselves at the border, books and all. But a somber man from the State Department, appalled at our effrontery, clearly didn't think anyone was safe driving a truck full of anything through the USSR.

Finally, after several false leads and literally months of complex communication with the Baltics via telegram, telex, fax and late-night telephone, a plan was worked out. Contact was made with the Estonian Cultural Foundation, a Tallinn-based group that had been granted the right, not easily obtained in the Soviet Union, to receive books in bulk from abroad. They agreed to accept our Yiddish books, no small favor, but we had to get them into the country ourselves. That was done via a shipping company in Helsinki that had recently proved its mettle by managing to deliver Hebrew-English dictionaries into the Baltics as a gift from a group of Finnish Baptists.

As for Lansky, Janice Rubin and myself, we got a lucky break. Only a month before our trip, an overnight run from Stockholm to Tallinn was opened with ferries large enough to take on vehicles. We would arrive in Tallinn with our own wheels (a one-ton van,

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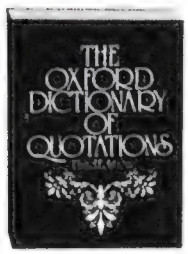

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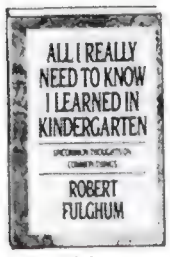

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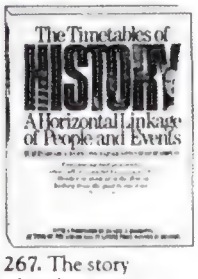

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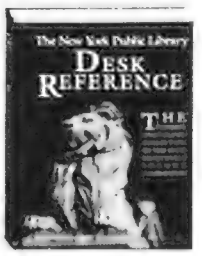

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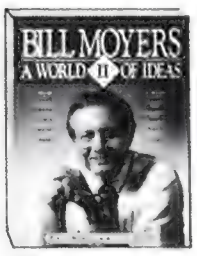

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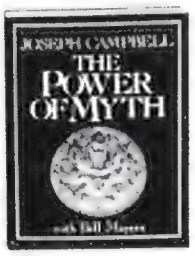

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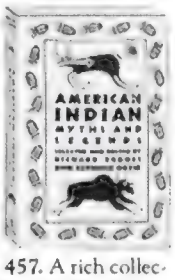

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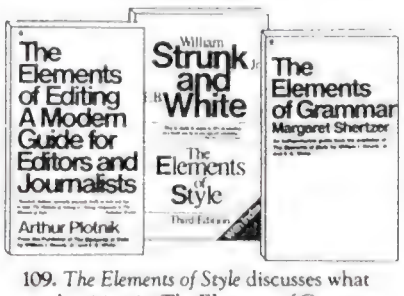
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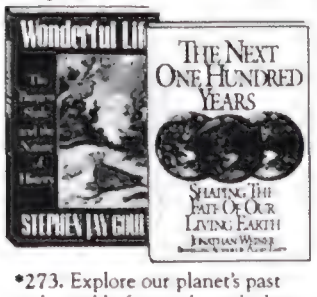

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Volunteers load second shipment, 6,000 books, in Riga. Principal Friedman, at the rear, cheers them all on.

Vacationing students, called back early to aid effort, form bucket brigade up stairs of their Riga school.

Barmazel and teacher Sima Gasel enjoy the pleasures of reading in Yiddish books fresh from their cartons.

which allowed us to masquerade as tourists while still having considerable schlepping capacity), rendezvous with the books and start to drive.

While the 14-hour trip to Tallinn on the sleek *Nord Estonia* proved painless enough for us, actually crossing the border was anything but. Between delays in getting the ramp down and the usual maniacal Soviet customs search, it took us three hours before the border guard let down a thin wire and allowed us into the city.

Bear hugs at the border

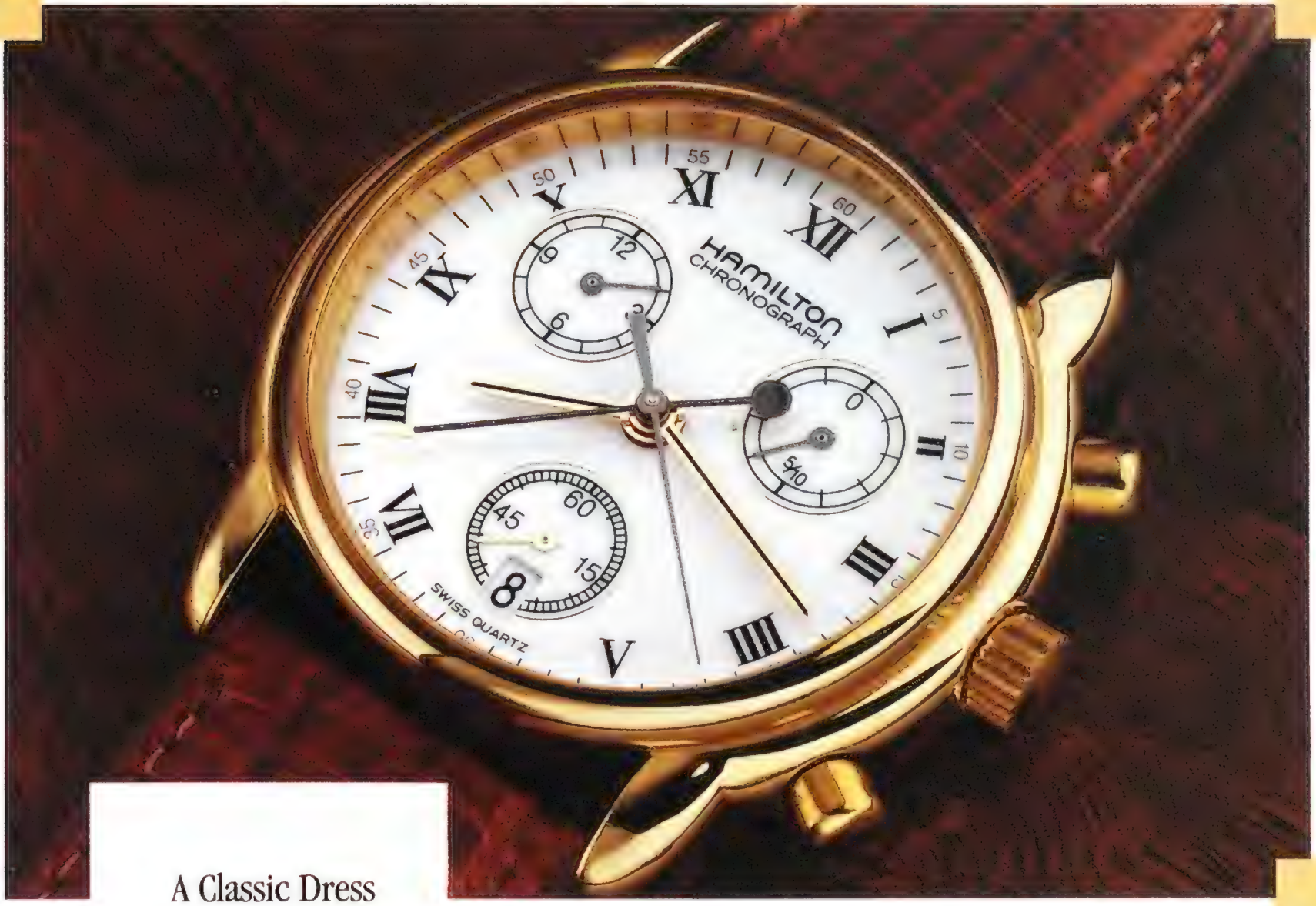
Waiting impatiently for all those hours was Moshe Michelson, our man in Tartu, who'd gotten up at 4:30 A.M. in order to be the first to envelop us in emotional bear hugs as we crossed the border. Since the books destined for Tartu had come in the first shipment from Port Elizabeth, Michelson had already seen them, and his whole body seemed to vibrate with enthusiasm as he told us in Yiddish, "There are no words to tell you how I felt when I opened the cartons. Such books! I was overwhelmed."

On the road to Tartu the next day to view the books' new home, Michelson told us that before our shipment arrived he'd made arrangements with the local city library to use one of their rooms for the collection, even though doubting friends had teasingly asked, "How can you have a library without books?"

The room in question proved to be quiet and utilitarian, with high ceilings and wooden cabinets. Michelson produced a key, opened the cabinets and, proud enough to burst, displayed the books, all neatly arranged alphabetically by author. "It's all gold, and I dragged it here with my own strength," he said, tears starting to form. "When I saw them the first time, I thought my head would explode. Give me 40 more years so I can read them all!"

Lansky, too, felt the emotion of the moment. "You have to keep in mind that these books originally came from Europe, that they were pulled out of dumpsters in New York, that five years ago they were illegal here," he said excitedly. "I can't tell you what it means to see these books here. I never thought it would happen."

After spending the night in Tallinn, we set out the next morning on the five-hour drive to Riga in Latvia. Driving in the USSR turned out to be an almost surreal experience. Though only Lithuania was officially the victim of a Soviet oil boycott, all the Baltic states were suffering from a shortage of gasoline, or "benzine," as it was locally known, a penalty for their efforts toward independence. Because there was precious little gas, there was almost no traffic. We would go five, sometimes ten minutes without seeing another car, giving the trip a time-travel feeling enhanced by repeated sightings of horse-drawn vehicles, a mode of



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transportation that has greatly increased in vogue.

When we arrived in Riga, a beautiful old city reminiscent of Budapest, our first stop was the Jewish Community Center, a large, elegant building, complete with a 550-seat auditorium, that had been the city's main Yiddish theater before the war. The lobby that day was as filled with people and activity as on any opening night. The cause, ironically enough, was a very gaudy Hebrew book fair put on by the Israeli government, complete with bright lights and fancy video displays. Totally unnoticed in a corner of the lobby, waiting patiently and unobtrusively in nearly 200 of those plain government-surplus cardboard boxes, was our second shipment of 6,000 books in Yiddish—a language that even here in its homeland seemed destined always to be the bridesmaid, never the bride.

As we began to sort the boxes, it became clearer why Lansky had insisted, even in the face of State Department scorn, on our having our own vehicle to do the job of distribution. Living in a system where for half a century any outward initiative had been consistently punished had bred any form of individual enterprise right out of most of its citizens. And no official wanted to take the lead in doing anything. Having our own van meant we could do an end run around endemic local indecision by independently carrying out our own decisions. In short, said Lansky, it "enabled us to function as American in a Russian context."

At the community center we also met Samuel Friedman, the 32-year-old, red-bearded principal of the 450-student Jewish school, who agreed to open up the place the next morning and to round up some of the students scattered by summer vacation to help us unpack the cartons. "The parents and children want Hebrew because of emigration to Israel, but Yiddish is our heritage, it was here historically, and we must have it as well," he said.

We agreed to rendezvous at the school at 8:30 the next morning, and we arranged to bring with us the man who had talked his former students into starting the institution, Avrom Barmazel. A frail, wispy man who lived alone in a tiny one-room apartment, half of which was taken up with glass-fronted, floor-to-ceiling bookcases, Barmazel liked to say that "in recent years my main occupation was being sick." He ventured into the streets of Riga very seldom, but seeing these books arrive as the completion of his dream was something he was determined not to miss.

A group of teenage students, uncertain at best as to why they'd been called back to school so early on a vacation morning, formed a giggling human chain and moved the cartons of books up the building's circular staircase. Then Lansky gathered everyone in the school's assembly room, and speaking Yiddish translated into Russian, began arousing the group's enthusiasm. Quickly cutting open one carton, Lansky shouted "What have we here?" with enough spirit to do justice to a Gutenberg Bible instead of the simple collection of biblical stories he pulled out, but his animation did the trick. The students, abandoning the pose of adolescent ennui, seemed intrigued, curious about the source of all this fuss. Having learned a smattering of Yiddish, they pulled the books out of carton after carton, turning the pages, making out some of the words.

Vilnius, Lithuania, was long the cultural center for the Jews of Eastern Europe. Here, an elderly woman walks through one of city's deserted streets.

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Horse-drawn carriage passes typical home in Ukmerge, once a bustling market town in Lithuania. "Millions of Yiddish-speaking Jews, gone."

"I have a lump in my heart and my eyes want to cry in happiness," Sima Gasel, one of the teachers, told us. "Perhaps you don't understand, but we are hungry in our hearts for this. We want to be Jews, we will be Jews."

Wandering around in a daze, a fragile, benevolent troll, was Barmazel. He picked up the books like old friends he hadn't seen in decades, and in fact, more than a few of them turned out to have been written by old friends long since dead. Now that the school had them, he worried, what would happen if the students didn't show enough interest? But his pessimism was short-lived. "If we have ten righteous men here," he said with surprising firmness, "we can begin again."

Now that we had seen the books safely to their Riga homes, the question that had been with us since the beginning of the trip reasserted itself: Would we be able to continue on and hand-deliver the books to Lithuania as we had hoped? Because Vilnius, its capital, was famous as the center of Jewish intellectual life for the entire region, we were eager to do so, but there were problems. We had been continually denied the required visas, and we had been told that because of the blockade, private consumption of gasoline had completely come to an end.

But Emmanuel Zingeris, head of the Jewish community in Lithuania and chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Lithuanian Parliament, was not a man easily discouraged. He bombarded us with telephone calls in Riga, insisting we come, assuring us that he would personally guarantee a full tank of gas for our van. He grandly told us that not having a visa would be no problem, but we were not so sure, and a phone call to a horrified U.S. Consulate in Leningrad confirmed our doubts.

The consulate, however, did have a suggestion. Since the Soviet Foreign Ministry in Riga would be staffed not with Russians but with Latvians friendly to Lithuania's cause, why didn't we try to get a visa there? No, the woman at the Latvian Ministry said sadly but firmly, a request for a visa to Vilnius had to go through Moscow and that would take a minimum of seven days. Wasn't there anything that could be done right now? Well, the woman said finally, she could give us visas to Minsk, with an overnight stop in Vilnius. A perfect solution.

Accompanying us on our drive were two young residents of Vilnius, a pair of 22-year-old welder's apprentices named Sasha and Simon. About two-thirds of the way through the journey, they suggested a side trip to a small Lithuanian town named Ukmerge. Formerly known as Vilkomir, it had been a home to Jews as far back as 1685, and at various times from a third to a half of its population had been Jewish. Though the Germans had liquidated all its Jews in 1941 and no others had gone there after the war, we decided that getting a glimpse of a former *shtetl* (a small Jewish community) was worth a detour.

As the van turned heads on the old-fashioned streets of Ukmerge, a fair-sized town of some 20,000, Lansky explained that most shtetls had been bustling market towns like this one, not sleepy rural hamlets. "Sixty years ago, if you walked down these streets you would have heard Yiddish," he said, shaking his head. "Millions and millions of Yiddish-speaking Jews, gone. That they could have disappeared without a trace, it feels inconceivable."

Then, headed out of town on a road different from the one we had come in on, someone saw the stone. Set back from the road, in the middle of a large green field

that a swing set marked as a park or playground, it was partially carved with Yiddish letters. We pulled off the road and got out for a closer look (below).

There was not one stone in the field but two. The larger one, which looked almost brand-new, said in Yiddish and Lithuanian: "The old Jewish cemetery. Hallowed is the memory of those who died." The smaller stone turned out to be a tombstone, circa 1740, apparently the only one to survive the desecration. The tranquility of the spot, the sun shining on mothers walking with laughing children, made what had happened here seem all the more terrible.

Lansky, whose tireless optimism had survived all the vicissitudes of the trip, here reached a breaking point. "It makes me feel how small our restitution is," he said, uncharacteristically pessimistic. "What can the load on this little van mean? This will make a difference, I thought. This will make amends. But look how small it is. There aren't enough books for the people buried in this cemetery, and this is only one shtetl out of thousands."

Back on the road to Vilnius, Lansky began to see what had happened in a different light. "I've been rescuing these books for so long, but when I experience things like this, I understand why," he said quietly. "It makes the return of these books all the more meaningful, all the more triumphant. When that world was utterly destroyed in 1941," he continued, "when the Germans were killing Jews in the street and burning synagogues, who could believe that we, the children and grandchildren of those who left or died, would be returning with copies of the very books they destroyed? No one thought there would be Jews here again, only dirt, only ashes. That's the final triumph of our trip. Our arrival is an act of defiance. They didn't succeed. Our culture survives."

Our trip didn't end on that sunny afternoon in Ukmerge. We went on to deliver the books to Vilnius, to attend a midnight meeting with the head of that city's black market to insure that we would have enough gas to return, even to deliver a collection of Yiddish books to the Estonian National Library back in Tallinn. But, emotionally, spiritually, after Ukmerge we had nowhere else to go.

"Hallowed is the memory of those who died," reads boulder in old Jewish cemetery in Ukmerge. The stone next to it, c. 1740, is the only one to have survived wartime desecration. The area is now a children's park.

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A young woman participating in the festival wears a traveling outfit of the Middle Ages, including a veil with pull-down edges to keep out dust, protect privacy. White face powder was used by women and men.

Photographs by H. Brooks Walker

An intimate look at Japanese style, simple and ornate

During Kyoto's Festival of the Ages, Japan's ancient capital reveals the subtle esthetics that bring together the country's past and present

Japanese esthetics are a study in contrast, a mix of the ornate and the simple, the bold and the restrained, the refined and the rustic, the cultural heritage of a people who through the centuries have sought to meld skill and creativity into perfection. It is a culture with a deeply rooted desire to make everything beautiful, from a finely woven silk brocade to the black stones in a garden gutter chosen because they glisten in the rain.

While the emphasis on the visual, of form over function, sometimes raises eyebrows, it never fails to inspire awe. At a traditional Japanese dinner, the taste of the food frequently is surpassed by the perfectly presented setting.

Reflecting its kaleidoscopic makeup, Japanese culture has been touched by a variety of influences, mainly from China and to some extent Korea, that were transformed and adapted into Japan's own indigenous character. The islands' isolated environment encouraged attention to detail, and its people developed an appreciation for the seasons of the year. Religious influences were vital. Buddhism, especially the simplicity advocated by the Zen sect, and the reti-

Horses in the festival, like those ridden by warriors of old, were adorned with elaborate harnesses.

Door curtain announces octopus dumplings within. Faded material indicates old, reliable establishment.

Black beach stones line a garden gutter of white granite from mountains, providing a pleasing contrast.

cent purity of the Shinto philosophy, with its emphasis on nature and ancestry, made important contributions.

Simple and straightforward form has long been identified as an ingredient of Japanese style. Throughout history, although Japan's political power shifted between aristocrats and warriors, emperors and shoguns, its artistic sense contained elements of both understated elegance and ornate luxury.

Nowhere is Japanese heritage more apparent than in Kyoto, which was the capital and home of the imperial court for more than a thousand years. It is here that the visual manifestations of past culture are most concentrated: in the preserves of gardens, temples and shrines; in old neighborhoods, some still dominated by wooden houses; and during the numerous *matsuri*, or festivals, which occur throughout the year. Most panoramic is the Jidai Matsuri, or Festival of the Ages. A procession of 2,000 costumed characters depicting the history of the city and its magnificent past, it inspired many of the photographs on these pages.

The quest for the ideal in Japanese art and culture was observed in the West in the late 19th century when the Meiji government opened Japan's doors to the world. Its approach was described by the art journal *Le Japon Artistique*, published in Paris from 1888 to 1891 by collector Samuel Bing:

"The Japanese are poets moved and inspired by the great spectacle of nature and attentive observers of the familiar mysteries of a world of exceeding minuteness. They learn geometry from the spider's web, take decorative motifs from the tracks of a bird across the snow and receive inspiration for curved designs from the ripples of wind on the water. In short, they believe that the fundamental elements of all things are to be found in nature. They believe that there is nothing in the world of creation that is not suited to the high ideals of art."

Many would argue that much is missing in the computerized environment of modern Japan. But esthetics born centuries ago are not so easily lost; a single blossom in a vase finds a place alongside a computer, and formal wedding gifts are still tied with golden string formed into a crane, the symbol for long life.

Carol Simons

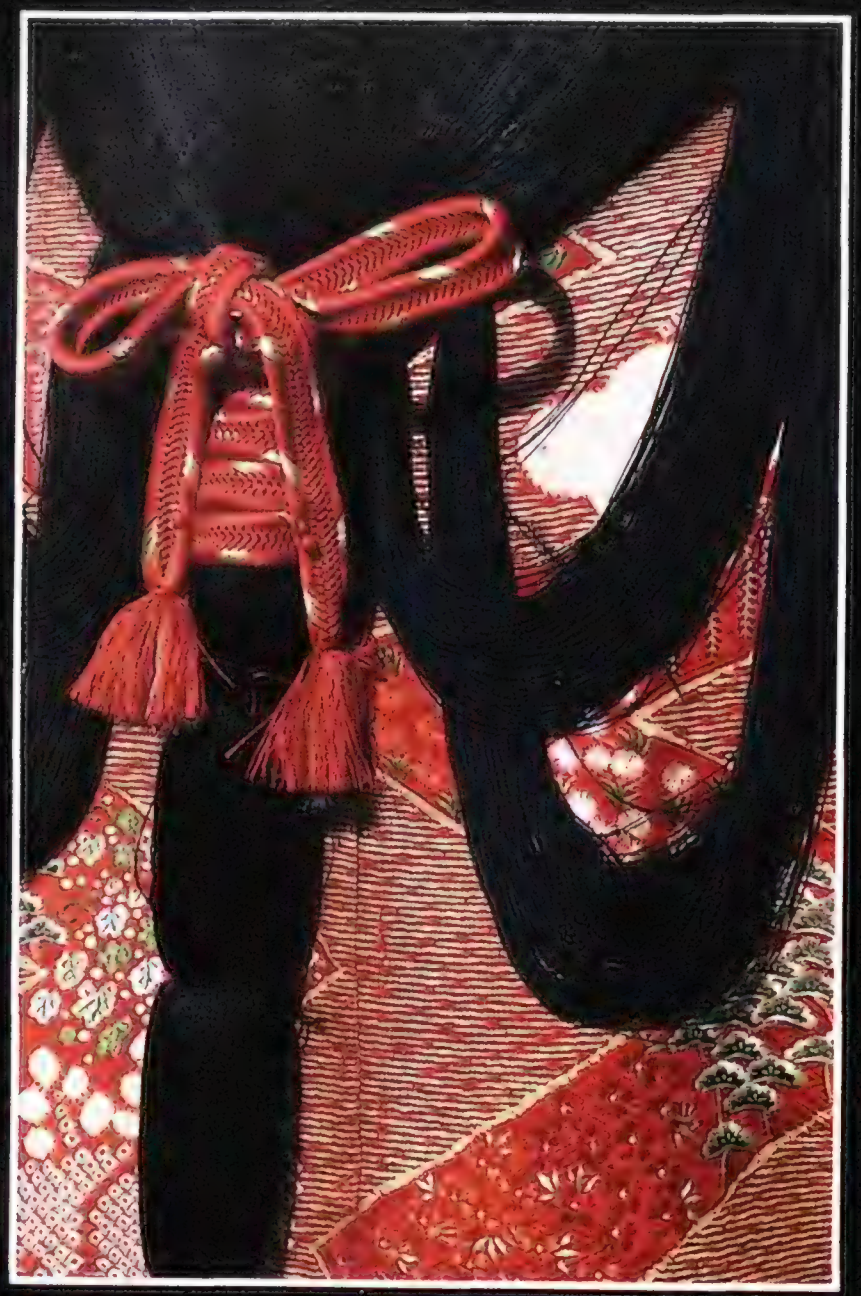
Tradition wins out over technology on some temples where wooden knockers are used instead of doorbells.

Cross-legged festival participant wears costume of tiny squares on blue-and-white fabric of lower classes.

Traditional architecture has prescribed rules and dimensions every carpenter knows. Dark framework contrasts with the smooth white plaster walls and shoji-paper doors; slats at right cover sliding window.

Man's kimono that was worn in the festival shows the quiet elegance of pattern and fabric—old designs still used today.

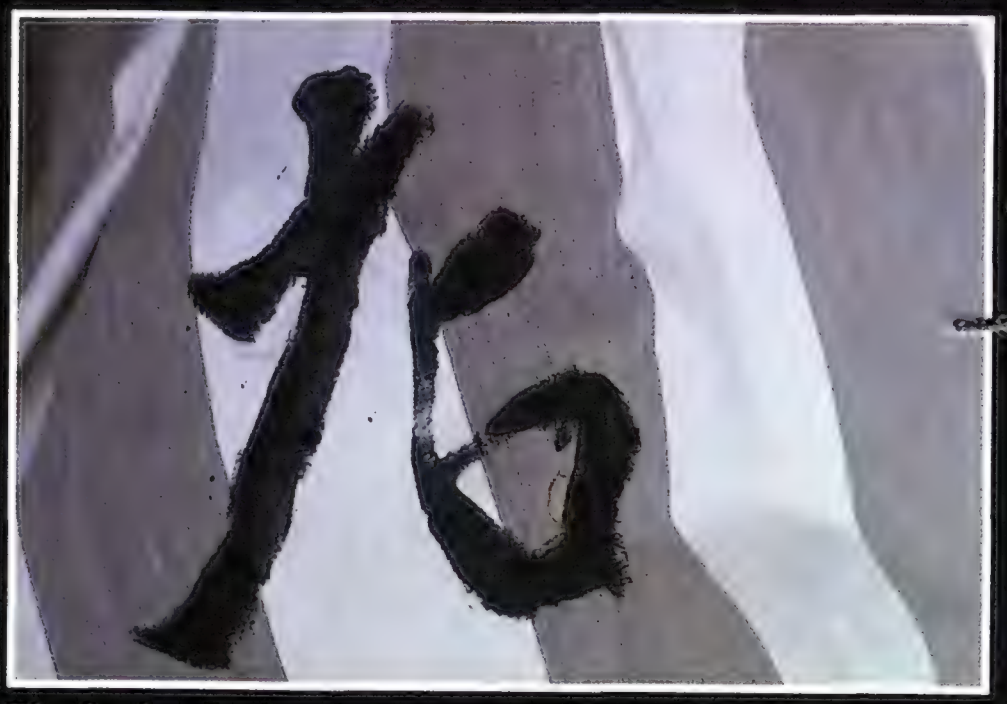
Samurai armor is assemblage of metal, leather, lacquer and cord. Sword was warrior's soul, forbidden to other classes.



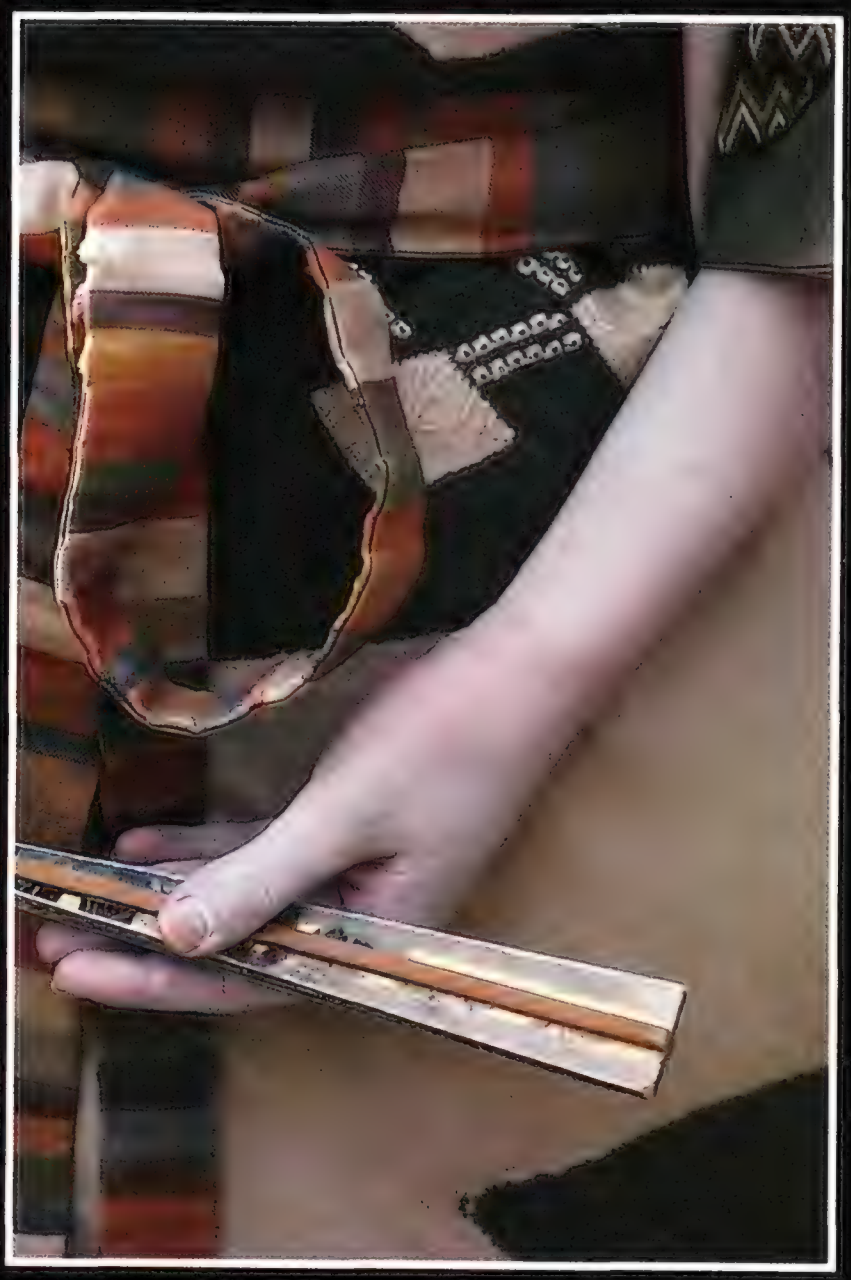
Fake ceremonial hair tied with a silk cord falls on a robe decorated with themes of nature: pines, waves.

A common plant, bamboo is used in most gardens for a variety of purposes; here it is split as a fence.

Woman holds folding fan, once considered essential element of traditional dress for both men and women.



The freehand painted character *mise*, meaning "shop," softens and contrasts with the stripe of the fabric.



Back of a kimono, as it was worn by a 16th-century woman, shows sense of design that is modern today.

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Prince William Sound, 1990

By Phil Patton

In Seaside, Florida, the forward thing is to look backward

A planned community is designedly striving to combine the best of what used to be with life today—keeping an eye to the future

Developer Robert Davis leans on one of the white picket fences that have become the town's hallmark.

The bright pastels and varied forms of Seaside create a compelling counterpoint to brilliance of the Gulf.

Seaside, Florida, located between Pensacola and Panama City, is probably the only town in the world where the homeowner is required to possess a picket fence. Rising and falling like the breakers of the Gulf of Mexico beyond, their posts topped with spear points or miniature roofs, looking like little steeples or watchtowers, the fences of the town represent the Seaside ideal of diversity in harmony—private space and public space in balance.

They are also reassuring and familiar—evocative of the quiet rhythm of small towns and older times. They are fences like those on the squares of Williamsburg, on Main Street in Disneyland, onstage in *Our Town* or on-screen in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. They reflect our ambiguous attitude toward the small town: while fleeing its narrowness, we yearn for its warmth.

The fence pattern is a miniature version of the architecture at Seaside and the code that regulates it. But more than the buildings, which include work by some of the most respected contemporary architects, the fences sum up what Seaside is: an experiment not just in planning and design, but in living.

"The new town. The old ways," runs its ad slogan. Seaside is conceived on the idea of reviving the archi-

Architectural photographs by Steven Brooke

Architects Andrés Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, Seaside's planners, work out of their office in Miami.

tecture and streetscape that summarize the best of Charleston, Savannah, Mobile, Key West, Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard. But it is also, even more, about creating a town that feels like a town, where people lean on their fences to chat, sit on their porches, walk, meet and talk on the street, and gather in common places as they did a century ago. Says Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, who with her partner and husband Andrés Duany devised the town's basic plan, "the fence, the walkway, the screen porch, create an elaboration of ceremony. You have a choice of realms ranging in increments from the public to the most private."

The town is laid out on its 80 acres in such a way that no point is more than a 10- or 15-minute walk from any other. Streets are devised to accept automobiles, but to resist their taking over entirely. The beach itself has been reserved as common space, its status signaled by a series of varied "pavilions"—sky-blue arches, pelican-topped gazebos, rangy pierlike walkways (p. 87).

At Seaside, the old saw that we shape buildings and buildings shape us is being put to the test. The question is whether good planning can create a good community. For, just as a house is not necessarily a home, an assemblage of houses is not necessarily a town. Seaside asks: Can you lure people, drawn inside by air-conditioning and television, to again sit on their porches? Can you, through rules, replicate codes that were driven by emotional force of tradition in taste and by construction capabilities? Do good fences make good neighbors—and a good neighborhood? But while Seaside framed these questions, something strange happened: it became a success and, some say, the victim of that success.

Now, a dozen years after it began as a glimmer behind the wire-rimmed glasses of developer Robert Davis, and halfway or so toward its eventual population of 300 houses, Seaside is facing another challenge.

The original vision was of a fairly sedate town of simple, bungalow-type beach houses. The white paint of those fences would peel and Seaside would, before long, become almost indistinguishable from a town built a hundred years ago. But what happened was different. More than a town, it became a model; more than a place to live, it became a place to visit.

Two hotels are planned for the waterfront, including one to be designed by Post-Modernist architect and theorist Robert A. M. Stern. But there are those who think they will never be built. Two architects independently explained why to me with the same phrase: "The whole town became a hotel." Today, Seaside's houses are most often filled not with owners, but with renters—people who have come to see what the place is all about. The great irony of the town is that its ideal of helping folks live comfortably close together is put into practice by people who will for the most part soon be far away.

Seaside is a model, a prototype, and like any prototype—like, perhaps, a Detroit show car, hinting at

Phil Patton, a frequent contributor, last wrote in these pages on the Museum of Modern Art's "High and Low" show, in the November 1990 issue.

Deborah Berke, of Berke & McWhorter Architects, has designed 15 Seaside homes, including the one at left.

Bill and Joan Wright's "transformed bungalow" has clapboard siding and screen porch, Seaside trademarks.

future possibilities for full production lines—it may be overstated, extreme. "Rather than a perfect example," says Plater-Zyberk, Seaside "is an extreme position." "It's a propaganda vehicle," says architect and Seaside owner Walter Chatham. "It has become," admits Plater-Zyberk, "a place of polemics."

As such, Seaside is an indisputable success. It has been almost smothered with praise. Architecture critic Vincent Scully calls it "a model that could stand for more democratic housing programs." Witold Rybczynski, the author of *Home* and *The Most Beautiful House in the World*, has compared its intimate scale to that of Siena, Italy. Prince Charles singled the town out for praise in his television series and book *A Vision of Britain*. The Prince's well-publicized aversion to modern architecture and his advocacy of neoclassicism have many of the same sources as Seaside, notably the theories of architect Leon Krier, who consulted on Seaside's plan and has built his own house there.

I made my own pilgrimage to Seaside not long ago and spent some time in one of its oldest houses (above), owned by Bill and Joan Wright of Dallas. To Bill Wright, the appeal was an environment like the beach areas he had visited as a child, not yet encumbered with T-shirt stands and noisy dune buggies. The simple, traditional architecture was another attraction.

The Wrights' house, which they rent out for a good portion of the year, is a fairly simple bungalow-derived structure, with balcony and generous L-shaped screen porch, painted the dusky blue of a jay. That color is a comparatively sedate hue for Seaside, where the colors are what strike you first. Unlike the fences of Seaside, unlike most of the original houses that inspired them, these houses are not white. Some are yellow, like big beach hotels of the early 20th century. Some are painted in pinks and peaches and purples never to be seen in old Charleston or Nantucket, except as part of a particularly gorgeous sunset. Nothing has become better known about Seaside than its hot pinks and purples, bright greens and yellows—its hyperpastels.

Photographs of Seaside have been widely reproduced, and its resulting public image is half Victorian, half Post-Modernist. But that is deceptive. Many of the most-published photographs show the Rosewalk area of town, centered on an interior garden space of roses, winding sand paths and a gazebo. Designed by Robert Orr and Melanie Taylor, Rosewalk was one of the first portions of the town to be built.

It is areas like Rosewalk that have led some architects and critics to deride the town as cute and backward-looking, a brand-spanking-new replica of an idealized past. Critics can point to the names of the houses as evidence: Fantasia, Peach Delight, Villa Whimsey, even Precious.

Other critics fear the town may come to resemble a residential version of those "festival marketplaces" like Baltimore's Harborplace or New York's South Street Seaport, which, when the novelty wears off, reveal themselves to be simply shopping centers with the decoration of historical themes. But Plater-Zyberk asserts that it is usually architects who are the critics. "Lay peo-

Tupelo Circle's gazebo has hosted weddings, parties; streets, open spaces in Seaside, serve as public rooms.

Local vernacular architecture inspired Tom Christ's design for a simple guest cottage, called Precious.

ple," she says, "understand Seaside immediately. It is the architects who say that it is regressive or 'just style.' "

Deborah Berke, who designed the Wrights' house, did her first house in Seaside in 1983 for a fee of $500. To date she has created 15 in all, and in a very different style, the market and meeting hall in the town center. Her houses are not, like some of those in Seaside, technically updated replicas, but what she calls "intelligent generic" types, aimed at "distilling familiar forms down to their essential elements." This idealizing of the vernacular, too, is part of the Seaside ideal.

The fence requirement is only a part of a code that applies to anyone who buys a lot in Seaside and builds a house there. The Seaside Urban Code and Construction Regulations, administered by the Seaside Architectural Review Committee, aims for "diversity within framework." Along Seaside Avenue, for instance, where the lots are large, the houses must have full-width, two-story porches. The idea is to inspire mansions not unlike those of Mobile or Pensacola. And the required white fence must not only be white (or, rather, one of 13 specific whites, listed by brand and number, from Benjamin Moore No. 103 or 105, to Sherwin-Williams 107-8070 or Glidden 2100) but must not match any other fence pattern on the same street.

Those white fences are vernacular forms—shapes originating in common customs and tradition, shapes to which builders in earlier times resorted unconsciously, without desire to be different, and yet shapes inevitably individual, like the accents of common speech. Seaside looks to many vernaculars, though. The result is a kind of anthology of the accents or

Urban theorist Leon Krier's award-winning "tower house," left of gazebo, was envisioned as a town gate.

Walkway leads down to beach at East Ruskin Street. Streets ending at Gulf have pavilions at beach entry.

dialects of vernacular, mingling the dulcet tones of the double-porch Mobile mansion, the drawl of the side-porch Charleston and the Cajun lilt of the Louisiana spraddle-roof.

The material vocabularies of these various dialects have much in common: galvanized steel roofs, screen porches, certain window patterns and siding types. Exteriors are of wooden clapboard, board-and-batten or occasionally shingle. Porches must cover a given percentage of the facade. Power, telephone and television cables must be run underground. Shutters must be real—operable—not fakes. Lights along the fences must be Progress P5204-38 "mushroom lights," or their equivalent, controlled by photocell—those gentle footlights of the Seaside theater. But Seaside's code tosses more modern terms into this linguistic mix as well: Anderson-type double-pane windows, heat pumps and vents, and modern, efficient wood stoves.

There is still another difference between the old and the new—perhaps the most important of all. In the small towns Seaside takes as its models, things happened unconsciously. Seaside is highly self-conscious. And residents, like their houses, are themselves constantly on display.

Sometimes one gets the impression that the fences in Seaside are there to protect the inhabitants from the steady stream of visitors. Walter Chatham tells of people walking onto his property—opening the gate of his fence—and boldly knocking on the door. "I was amused by it," Chatham says, "but my wife freaked out at first."

A common activity in the town is simply walking about and observing progress on construction under way. Constant building gives it a sense of almost frontier-town vigor. To deal with the building code, and since contractors must be approved by the town, most owners rely on architects and contractors who have worked there before and know the system. The contractors, for their part, regard Seaside somewhat wryly: sometimes with skepticism but always with appreciation for it as a source of remunerative work (construction costs in Seaside run roughly twice as much per square foot as elsewhere in the Panhandle).

The code is not without its critics. Berke today describes herself as part of "the loyal opposition" to the code: "The code could be far less strict and still succeed. The code has taken on a life of its own, imparted by the already existing buildings. It's self-perpetuating." The rule mandating variety for the picket fences, for example, was part of an effort to guard against the architectural "lowest common denominator." But this fear of bland uniformity has proved unfounded. It is the danger of excessive variety, if anything, that is on the minds of those who have watched Seaside evolve.

Of late, the code has been under pressure. Around Seaside they speak, like test pilots, of "pushing the envelope" of the code. One house that did so, Walter Chatham's double house of rough materials—including corrugated metal siding and shop-front shutters—was not popular (p. 88). "They watched like hawks," Chatham recalls. "People went up to Robert [Davis] and asked, 'Is that really within the code?' "

The most dramatically different building is the first commercial building, a structure officially named the

Walter Chatham's double house of rough materials stirred up controversy in Seaside with its unusual interpretation of the town's building code. A modified "dogtrot," Chatham's house actually consists of two structures linked by a deck.

Dreamland Heights Building but known to everyone in Seaside as the Holl Building, after its award-winning architect, Steven Holl.

Holl himself wanted to call it the Hybrid Building, given its mix of functions—apartments upstairs, offices beneath, stores on the ground floor. It is a dramatic departure from wooden beach houses, and not everyone likes it. ("I've learned to live with it," says longtime owner Bill Wright, a bit grudgingly.) The concrete structure is in part evocative of an Old West hotel and in part reminiscent of the rough industrial buildings in an early Fellini film. The windows of the apartments suggest something in Eastern Europe; the back, with its little awnings, looks like the loading area of a small-town, Midwestern feedstore.

Next door to the Holl Building is the market, and fitted into its back, the town meeting hall. This structure was designed by Deborah Berke, but in a very different idiom from her houses. It is a reticent building of simple industrial materials, such as concrete block and exposed steel trusses. Like the Holl Building, it suggests that, as Walter Chatham puts it, "style doesn't matter" in Seaside. The town, he believes, could be composed of high-tech metal houses and its plan would still shape life the same way. "Style is not as important as the plan, as creating urban spaces," agrees Plater-Zyberk.

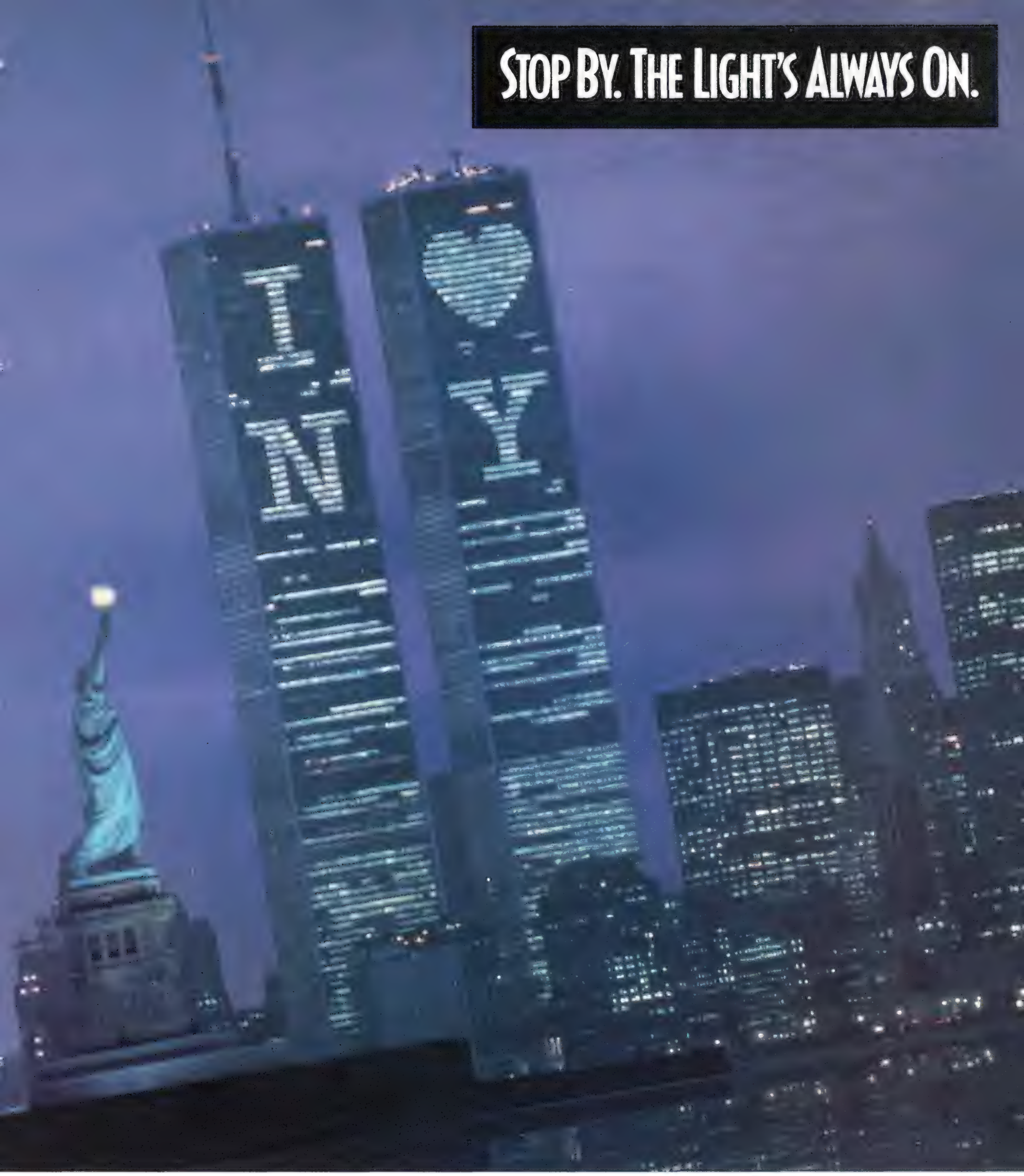
The plan attempts to strike the balance between the individual and the collective, the unusual and the typical, the style and the code, the house and the street; that is at the center of what Seaside is about. Like the fences in Seaside, the plan does not so much separate as mediate between the individual and the community. It echoes past town plans the way its architecture echoes past architectures. Breaking the standard town grid with diagonals and curves, Seaside's plan gives it common space. Streets have focuses. Public spaces have focus, too, and a comforting sense of containment. "Outdoor room" is one of the favorite expressions here.

The streets are supplemented by pedestrian paths—sandy, backyard byways that avoid the streets and that children love—a suggestion of Leon Krier's. These had been used in the late 1920s as a critical element in the layout of Radburn, New Jersey, an experimental suburban community.

The center of town faces a semicircular town green, focusing for now on a tiny Greek Revival-style post office, designed by Davis himself. (Eventually it is to be moved, and in its stead a tower by Leon Krier will be constructed on the site.) Radiating to the northeast is a grand avenue, simply "Seaside Avenue," designed for the largest houses in town, which terminates in a pool with Palladian pool house where you can buy a hot dog. To the northwest, on another axis, is the center of a planned "lyceum" loosely modeled after Thomas Jefferson's University of Virginia campus. It will serve as a combined education, conference and performing arts center.

Across Highway 30-A, and providing a series of gateways to the beach, are not houses, at least for now, but a set of pavilions, one containing a pair of restrooms shaped like tiny temples. There is also an open-air market of awnings and small closetlike buildings. Called Per-spi-cas-ity, in the summer it sells baskets and clothes and "whimsical fish widgets."

To the east range Seaside's "honeymoon cottages," designed by architect Scott Merrill and inspired by Thomas Jefferson's honeymoon cottage, later incorporated as an outbuilding at his beloved Monticello. The honeymoon cottages have new efficient Mitsu-



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bishi heat pumps; some of them also have Jacuzzis.

The beaches that the houses look out on are almost entirely quartz and brilliantly white. The beach pavilions tend to blue, green or white, colors that pick up the varying colors of the water. To the west and north of the town is a kind of rough frontier of pine and palmetto scrub forest that is wonderfully appealing. The same might be said of the built environment outside of Seaside: the ordinary buildup of Florida seashore, its stylistic variety summed up by crime writer Elmore Leonard as "privies and spaceships."

Possessing a seedy, vigorous quality, these houses, with boats tucked beneath their green, translucent, fiberglass carports, represent a more recent vernacular: the vernacular of the off-the-shelf, of building-supply chipboard and green corrugated-fiberglass panel. Call it "shack vernac."

Walter Chatham, for one, came to Seaside imagining it would reflect more of the "shack" culture outside. As a result, perhaps, the house he built, compounded of two adjacent sheds of corrugated steel and exposed four-by-tens, became controversial in town. Now he sometimes jokingly fantasizes about an anti-Seaside—an apotheosis of the shack vernac he calls Darkside.

Without the surrounding palmettoed Panhandle, Seaside might not seem so different. But a world full of Seasides would lack something—a vigor, a freedom—that the existing Panhandle culture provides.

It was a love of the Panhandle's natural environment that inspired Seaside's creation. In 1980, Robert Davis inherited a parcel of land from his grandfather. As a child, Davis spent his summers in this area. Later, at Antioch College in Ohio, he went to meetings of the Socialist Worker's Party, an inclination that did not divert him from going on to Harvard Business School. After a stint working in public housing in Miami, Davis became a developer, building small, elegant town house complexes in the Coconut Grove area, designed in the best tropical-modern tradition. "Are you a reformed modernist?" I asked him after seeing photographs of some of them. "Aren't we all?" he replied.

It was in Miami that Davis met the young architects Duany and Plater-Zyberk. They, in turn, introduced him to the Luxembourg-born, London-based Leon Krier, the theorist of neoclassical urbanism, whom the pair of planners admired. In the early '80s Davis took what he refers to as a "sabbatical," traveling in Europe and driving around the Southern United States in a red Pontiac Bonneville. It was during this time that the ideas for Seaside began to come together in his mind.

Davis has read widely in architectural history and theory. It is not by accident that Seaside's street listings include both a Ruskin Street and a Ruskin Place—named after the author of *The Stones of Venice.* Davis was inspired also by Camillo Sitte, whose *The Art of Building Cities* reacted against wide, straight boulevards—fine for an emperor's procession, but not for the man in the street—in favor of streets with ends, destinations, and intimate, enclosed, public spaces.

The first impression Davis makes is not unlike the fences of Seaside: what at first seems in him reserve is soon understood to be thoughtfulness and neighborly consideration. He listens well, thinks calmly, and speaks articulately about the town and his ideas. That,

Presiding over town center is Steven Holl's Dreamland Heights Building (right), Seaside's first commercial structure. Holl thinks of it as the "Hybrid Building" for its mix of residences, offices and stores. Deborah Berke designed the market at left.

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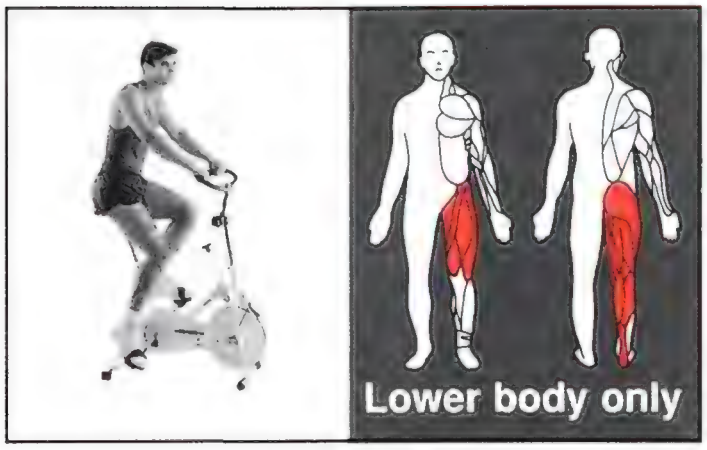

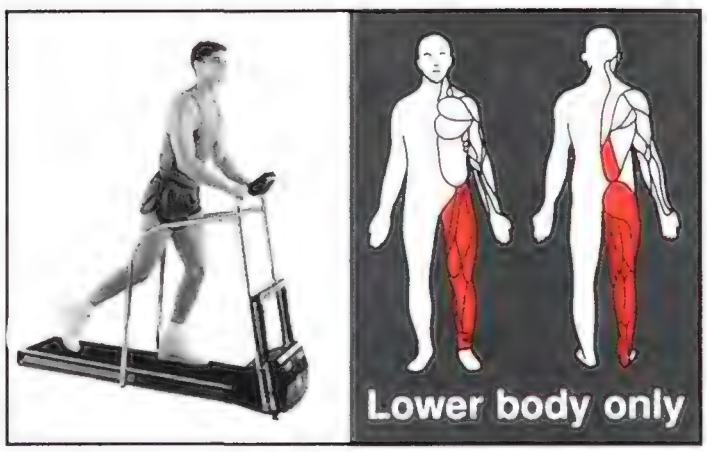

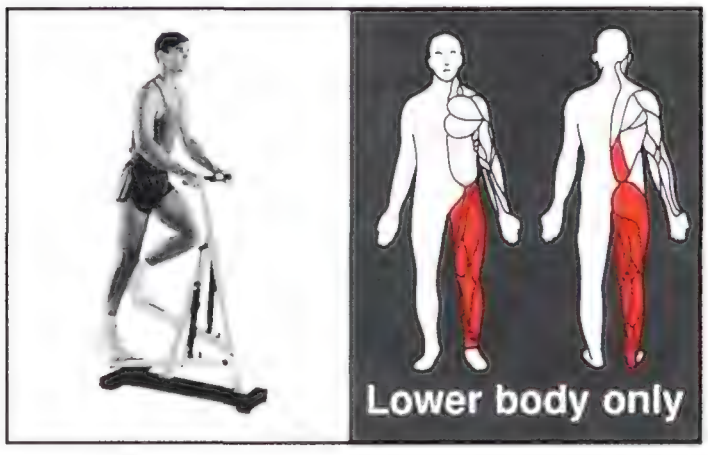

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View from bedroom doorway of Leon Krier's classical cottage evokes longing for intimate scale, past times.

I quickly concluded, is a major part of his job. He is part counselor, part court of appeals, the man to whom people go with complaints and suggestions. He is as at home talking about the practical as the esthetic, warming to praise the efficient, superquiet heat pumps outside the honeymoon cottages, discussing on-street parking as a device to slow traffic, or deploring the tyranny of the traffic engineer. "Any town worth its salt," he says, "has a parking problem."

Davis' office in the Holl Building, filled with rather stern Arts and Crafts furniture, could as easily be from 1920 as 1990. A single window above his desk frames a view of the Gulf. He looks every bit the intellectual despot he jokes about being; with his wire-rims and no-nonsense haircut, he suggests a cultural commissar from the early, heady days after the Russian Revolution.

From a small cluster of houses, Seaside's growth and the acclaim it has received have startled Davis and those who were with him at the beginning. Indeed, among veterans there is a lot of nostalgia for the "frontier" days of Seaside. Deborah Berke recalls a mood that reminded her of Paolo Soleri's disciples at work on his Utopian city in Arizona, a sort of "summer camp for architects, where you would play volleyball on the beach during the day and stay up late talking about Big Ideas."

And, whether owners or visitors, people in Seaside do walk, talk, interact. "Your paranoia slips away," says New Yorker Walter Chatham; "there is a kind of spontaneity to life in Seaside. You head for the post office and meet someone who suggests you have a cup of coffee, and then maybe you go walk on the beach together." And despite the steady glow of the television sets one sees at night, people do come out on their porches. "We've worn out three porch swings," Bill Wright told me, "and two sets of rockers."

Seaside's success has led to imitations and successors—some of them by Andrés Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk themselves. The couple's firm has designed more than 30 towns or developments, and a dozen of them are now under construction. "They have changed the way developers look at land use," says Deborah Berke. It is thanks to their propagandizing and the example of Seaside that a buzzword among developers around the country today is "Traditional Neighborhood Concept."

It was, of course, the financial success of the town that, for the developer, legitimized its esthetics. Success, too, has had the consequence that prices for lots and houses have gone up dramatically—perhaps quadrupled. When I visited, Charleston House was for sale at $295,000; a small shotgun called Ivy Cottage, for $179,000. By contrast, in nearby Seagrove, houses of comparable size may sell for only half as much.

New houses in Seaside are larger and more dramatic; as the town's fame has grown, architects and owners feel pressure to make statements with each new structure. Deborah Berke notes, "The original intent was to create a series of repetitive bungalows not unlike the Wrights' house. Now with land prices higher, people are building far grander homes. You're not going to build a $40,000 cottage on a $70,000 lot." Houses take advantage of every allowed square foot, "maxing out the buildable envelope," as architect Scott Merrill explains it.

The bittersweet price of success

Success has made Seaside more expensive and has heightened criticism that it is an unrealistic enclave, a dream town, escapist. A house here is a luxury almost like a yacht, and many houses bear signs with their names, along with the names and hometowns of their owners, exactly as on the sterns of pleasure craft.

But with houses so expensive, the real luxury—which few owners, tied to jobs or businesses elsewhere, can afford—is to live in their houses instead of rent them out. Even in the middle of the summer, owners actually in Seaside represent a minority. Had Seaside

been located somewhere else, had it been a bedroom suburb rather than a resort, things might have been different. "What is missing from the equation," says Walter Chatham, "is the workplace." Robert Davis originally envisioned a town with more permanent residents, who he imagined as staying in touch with distant offices by computer and fax machine. But even Davis does not expect that more than a third of Seaside's owners will be permanent residents any time soon.

Davis' joking references to himself as despot suggest that democracy is still an unbuilt part of Seaside's plan. The corporation dominates the town, although, each January, owners get together for their equivalent of the town meeting. Their power has proceeded only so far. It was owners, to be sure, who nixed the original plan for streets of crushed shell. Bill Wright recalls, "We didn't want the dust from the shells." Owners were assessed for the additional cost of brick.

More recently, a proposal by a private entrepreneur to reduce traffic by providing horse carriage service in the town was scotched by owner resistance even before it reached the floor of the meeting. To some Seasiders, the idea had overtones of a tourist gimmick—fine for Williamsburg or Disneyland or Central Park but not here. Others were more daunted by the prospect of equine emissions than by automotive ones.

The real test may come this year, when Davis and family move to Italy on sabbatical for six months, with a fellowship from the American Academy in Rome. "Sometime," he admits, "this place is going to have to get along without me."

If Seaside was once like a camp, it is today a campus. It should perhaps be seen as the latest example of the American tradition of uplifting colonies—from the Transcendentalists' Brook Farm to Chautauqua. Is Seaside, then, "real life"? No—fortunately. But it is a real town—real in the sense that the lines of an architect's plans are not, but the walls built from them are, or that the lines of a property survey are not, but the fences that run along them are.

Soft light accentuates the harmonious diversity of Seaside's mandated pitched roofs and porches. Town's plan and code have struck a successful balance between past and present that serves as a model for the future.

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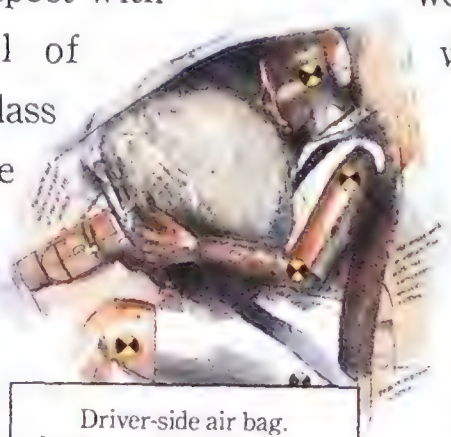

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But without question, Chrysler New Yorker Fifth Avenue and Cadillac Sedan DeVille are both very luxurious. Both extraordinarily well equipped. And both perform with great responsiveness.

Yet, even with its substantial price advantage, the Fifth Avenue doesn't ask you to compromise any of your requirements in creature comforts, safety or handling.

A driver's side air bag is standard, along with a powerful,

† Base sticker price comparison. Standard equipment levels vary. Taxes, destination charges and optional equipment extra. *ABS brakes optional on Fifth Avenue at an additional cost of $899 M.S.R.P., standard on Cadillac Sedan DeVille.

...een Cadillac Sedan DeVille ...Fifth Avenue.

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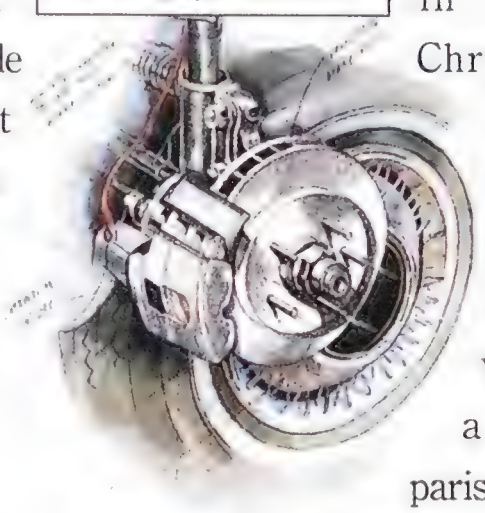
Chrysler Fifth Avenue. $20,875

fuel-efficient, fuel-injected 3.3L V-6 engine. Anti-lock brakes are available.* And inside a quiet relaxing environment as attentive to your needs as any luxury car in the world.

Then there's Chrysler's Crystal Key Program.** The industry's best luxury sedan warranty. A protection package that provides better owner care than DeVille with bumper to bumper coverage for 5 years or 50,000 miles, in addition to Chrysler's **7/70** powertrain protection.

Advanced anti-lock braking system (ABS)



With all of that in mind, we suggest that a hands-on comparison between the Chrysler New Yorker Fifth Avenue and Cadillac Sedan DeVille is well worth making.

Because while both attest to your good taste, the Fifth Avenue offers you the distinct luxury of arriving with $9,500 more affluence.†

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Advantage: Chrysler.

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By Rudolph Chelminski

The only thing that the 'fixmaster' never says is no

If the concierge can't do it, then it probably can't be done. Without this extraordinary breed of fixer, no hotel could ever be grand

At Dukes in London, concierge Thom Broadbent sets a lofty professional standard: "We get the ungettable."

A little more than a year ago, Parisian motorists, already the world's uncontested champions of cavil and complaint, were afforded yet another chance to exercise their critical skills when their nervous little cars were briefly held up by the passage of several police-escorted buses roaring purposefully to and from the Montparnasse area of town. "More damned VIPs," they could be seen mouthing behind their windshields. "Is this what I evade my taxes for? Ah, la-la, this country's really going to hell."

As it happened, those buses *were* filled with very important people, though not of the usual "official" variety. The passengers were *concierges*, hotel concierges, and nobody even comes close to this extraordinary breed of professional fixers for getting extraordinary things done. I don't know about you. Maybe you turn to your rabbi or your chaplain or your Senator or your shrink when you are really in a bind. Me, I travel a lot, and I have found the solution that always works. I ask my friendly concierge.

The concierge is to the grand hotel what Talleyrand was to Napoleon. Find yourself naked in a hotel elevator? (Yes, it has happened; I'll explain shortly.) Pick up that little phone and buzz the concierge. Need to stock up your private zoo? Drop by the concierge's loge and talk to the man. Care to rent a fleet of limos and horse-drawn carriages? By all means. Want a belly dancer for tonight, or a dry cleaner for your Mercedes, or your own sleeping car added to a train, or a subterfuge for a certain rendezvous? No problem, sir.

Those of you who are of a superior cultural level will no doubt recall the lyrics of that great Cole Porter song "Friendship":

> If you're ever in a jam, here I am.
> If you're ever in a mess, S.O.S. . . .
> If you're ever up a tree phone to me.
> If you're ever down a well ring my bell.*

That's the concierge.

Like uniformed doormen, little plastic bottles of toiletries and $400 rooms, the concierge is the obligatory hallmark of the world's grand hotels. Without him (or her, since women are now moving in), the place is merely a high-class flophouse. Walk into the lobby and you will spot him right away: the concierge is the one in the knee-length suit coat with the crossed gold keys on his lapels and the two telephones growing out of his ears. He has an expression of harried pa-

Unflappable Gérard Thiault takes calls at Hôtel Plaza Athénée in Paris, where he has worked for 40 years.

Photographs by Mark S. Wexler

*"Friendship" Words and Music by Cole Porter
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Concierge Pierre Porte at Meridien Montparnasse discusses special dinner request with chef Raoul Gaiga.

Viewed from balcony of the Ritz in London, staff of the "fixmaster" keeps busy at the concierge station.

tience, piercing eyes that dart continually around the room and a sheaf of papers under his hands, and he is hissing (in Italian) at a bellboy at the very moment that he is assuring Mrs. Mandelbaum that her theater reservations are all right for this evening, Madam. As he stands at his loge in his half-moon glasses (he is usually over 50, because he has earned his job through the years), he is a splendid, dignified, commanding figure: honcho of the reception domain, captain of the ship.

So important has the concierge become to modern *hôtellerie* that he is now commonly removed from the service staff roster and listed among executive management. Jürg Tüscher, the recently deceased general manager of Hong Kong's great Mandarin Oriental Hotel, called concierges "the soul" of the establishments they serve. "Modern hotels rely on the concierge," he said. "Important clients don't say hello to me—they say hello to the concierge."

For such an august personage, the etymology of the word "concierge" is disappointingly unexalted. Depending on the dictionary you use, this very French word can derive from the Low Latin *concerius*, signifying one who is the guard of a building, or the Latin *conservus*, a fellow slave. Whichever origin you choose, though, the hotel concierge is imperatively not to be confused with the foul-tempered Breton and Auvergnat doorkeepers, almost exclusively women, who guarded French apartment buildings in the time of Henry Miller and Ernest Hemingway. That breed of concierge is gradually dying out now, supplanted for the most part by code buttons.

The massive injection of hotel concierges into the streets of Paris a year or so ago came about because of the 37th annual convention of the trade's international association, Les Clefs d'Or (The Golden Keys), bringing together representatives from 25 countries and six continents. Naturally enough, the French Minister of Tourism was there to stand at attention and assure them of his entire support and admiration, even as Pierre Porte, chief concierge of the Hotel Meridien Montparnasse and president of the Clefs d'Or's French chapter, sternly warned that profit-hungry hoteliers were increasingly tempted to reduce personnel costs by eliminating the concierge loge.

Seasoned travelers can ill imagine how any business type, even the most dollar-bound New York bottom-liner, could possibly conceive of a serious hotel without a concierge staff. No Coke and Twinkie machines can replace a restaurant, and the computer has not been invented that can hiss in Italian. "Unfortunately, there

Rudolph Chelminski lives in France and reports frequently on European affairs. He last wrote for SMITHSONIAN *on the Danube River, in July 1990.*

At the Athénée, where joggers are discouraged from trekking through lobby, Thiault shows guest a side exit.

are some hotels which open without concierges and others which are declaring their concierges redundant," sighs André Damonte, the urbane World War II paratrooper who doubles as chief concierge of London's Hyatt Carlton Tower and president of the international Clefs d'Or. "This is a concern, but it is up to us to make a small, friendly revolution in favor of our profession, working hand in hand with management. As for my own experience, the bottom-line managers are all gone, and I'm still here."

Damonte and his confreres—the Clefs d'Or counts some 4,000 members worldwide—are still here today because the customers demand them. Concierges may cost money, but travelers love them. Men like Gérard Thiault of Paris' Plaza Athénée, José Rabadán of the Inter-Continental in Paris, John Spahr of Claridge's in London, Walter Freytag of the Bayerischer Hof in Munich and David Langartner of the Vier Jahreszeiten, also in Munich, Albert Ostertag of the Baur au Lac in Zurich and Giovanni Valenti of the Mandarin Oriental are authentic stars of their trade, as renowned among travelers as are tenors to the opera crowd. Any manager temerarious enough to remove these indispensables from their jobs would be likely to find himself faced with an epidemic of last-minute cancellations, stolen towels, overflowing bathtubs or whatever other form of revenge a loyal public might be able to devise.

As the emblem on his lapels indicates, the concierge is the man in charge of the keys, but his functions have developed so widely with the passing years and changing travel patterns that the key thing has become entirely secondary. A couple of generations ago, when it was mostly the rich who voyaged, mostly by train and ocean liner, the concierge was little more than a bell captain, charged with muscling steamer trunks, dogs, birds and whatever else the rich traveled with, up to their suites. Private secretaries took care of the rest.

Now that business is king and tourism has become widely democratized, the chief concierge and his staff have to play private secretary to a hotelful of guests. It is a tremendously important role, and those who have risen to the top are truly exceptional professionals whose devotion to service can be quite astounding.

Concierges I have spoken with do not hesitate to describe their clients in fatherly tones as "orphans" or "lost children," and it is undeniable that much of their work consists of adult baby-sitting, comforting a host of travelers who find themselves in a foreign city unable to speak the language, find the shops, recognize the monuments or order in the restaurants. "We have a reception staff and computers," says Lars Henriksson, a concierge at Stockholm's Grand Hotel, "but the guest belongs to me." Gérard Thiault puts it this way: "The client's problems are my problems."

The hallmark of the grand hotel

Students listen intently to lecture at concierge school in Paris. Women constitute a third of enrollment.

My own first professional encounter with this can-do spirit was in 1963 or '64 at the Ledra Palace Hotel in Nicosia, Cyprus, where as a reporter I was supposed to watch the Greeks bash the Turks and vice versa. The Palace's legendary concierge, a remarkable man named Savass, became expediter, dispatcher and mission control for the entire world press corps, whose prima donnas were largely engaged in sneaking about like Evelyn Waugh personages, hiding from one another the identical information that they had all received from Savass in the first place. In war situations people tend to be generous, though, and I hope Savass was able to retire on the gratuities he received from us. Most recently it was Mihai Hritcu, concierge of the Hotel National in Bucharest, who earned my admiration—first by participating in demonstrations against Ceausescu, then by bandaging up the wounded, sending telexes, translating, negotiating variable exchange rates, giving interviews and in general making himself available to the point of becoming indispensable. It was typical concierge style.

The professional deontology of the Clefs d'Or mandates discretion as the highest virtue of all—"I listen, but I do not hear," as Thiault nicely phrases it. In a quarter-century or so of traveling around Europe and Asia as a journalist, however, I have wheedled enough information from the brotherhood to work up a small anthology of anecdotes illustrating the more colorful aspects of their work. For if 95 percent of a concierge's time is spent on the routine—travel reservations, theater tickets, restaurants and the like—the remaining 5 percent can be right lively, indeed.

The quest for a naked guest

It was Pierre Porte, French Clefs d'Or president, who dealt with the naked man in the elevator. On duty at his desk one night, he heard a mysterious hiss, then the closing of the elevator doors. He noticed nothing unusual, so went back to his work. Two minutes later the hiss returned with the elevator, and this time Porte spotted its origin: a birthday-suited Japanese guest who apparently had prepared his bath and then gone through the wrong door—which slammed behind him, naturally. The gent was understandably shy about his awkward situation and sped away in his elevator as soon as Porte approached. Porte was eventually obliged to call in the hotel's security squad to comb the floors before the evasive stranger could be found and returned to his lodgings.

On another occasion Porte was called on to locate a belly dancer in Paris for a Middle Eastern soiree. But as exotic as it sounds, this was only normal concierge work, as run-of-the-mill as the day Porte called a dry cleaner to send a couple of men to clean the white

Francis Spiteri of the Dorchester, London, samples fare at a restaurant before recommending place to guests.

José Rabadán makes sure to bid a personal farewell as a guest departs the Hotel Inter-Continental in Paris.

suede top of a client's custom-made Mercedes. Nothing to it. So it was for Lars Henriksson in Stockholm, who was only carrying out his job, but on a somewhat larger scale, when he got together 50 limos and ten horse-drawn carriages for the procession through town of an Irish guest who had taken a Swedish bride. For a client from an oil-producing country, Damonte once transformed a private jet into a latter-day Ark, filling it with nearly 20 pairs of animals for the gentleman's personal zoo. José Rabadán, who some time ago managed on 24 hours' notice to send 4,000 white roses to a client's lover in Cairo, knows concierges who have purchased Parisian *vespasiennes* (public urinals) as mementos for guests. Thiault, who is generally esteemed as the world's champion of concierges, once arranged to purchase a town house complete with a garden for a client who decided that she had to have more space to walk her two German shepherds.

Such foibles of the rich have not entirely disappeared. Some of the European concierges send bellboys on transatlantic hops from time to time for clients who find it a bore to tote their own luggage. The crossed keys that André Damonte sports on his jacket are solid gold—a little token of thanks from a French client for whom he organized a face-lift. Paul Francq of the Royal Windsor in Brussels once ordered an entire sleeper to be added to the Brussels-Milan train for a client who hated planes, while Jean Venturini, formerly of the Martinez in Cannes, has been called upon for at least two difficult negotiations: a tipsy guest who bought a donkey from an ice cream vendor and wanted to bring the beast into his room, and a starlet's lovelorn suitor who pursued the object of his attentions through the front door and into the main lobby at the wheel of his BMW.

Lajos Molnar, chief concierge of the Ramada Grand Hotel, in Budapest, tells a story that has by now acquired the stature of legend. When a guest slipped in the bathtub and broke his leg a decade or so ago, the concierge called an ambulance. Responding with admirable speed, the ambulance crew arrived in the lobby even before the concierge had brought the injured party downstairs. Then the fun began. "They spotted this other American guest who was sitting in an armchair with his leg up on the table, the way Americans do," Molnar says. "They assumed that was the gentleman with the broken leg, so they went over, lifted him up and began taking him away. The guy screamed bloody murder because he had heard all about the Iron Curtain, and figured he was being kidnapped to a gulag or something. The more he screamed, the more the ambulance people thought he was in pain, so the more they hurried. The concierge finally convinced them to go upstairs and fetch the other man in his room."

A concierge is often able to perform tricks that are

At the Bayerischer Hof in Munich, concierge Walter Freytag delivers message to guest lounging at poolside.

little short of miraculous. Rabadán once sprang tickets to a sold-out Paris opera through the house electrician, and Francis Spiteri of the Dorchester in London managed seats at the Wimbledon final for a guest who flew in from Miami on the last day of the tennis competition. Don't ask how they do it; they *know* people, that's all. When their local knowledge is pooled in the friendly international mafia of the Clefs d'Or, the results are astonishing efficiency. Every concierge has a story about phoning around to a colleague in another country for clients who find themselves in trouble because of theft, lost luggage, mislaid passports or any other of the dozens of mishaps that lie in wait for unwary travelers. "Our word is our bond," says Damonte. "All I have to do is ask Gérard Thiault or Walter Freytag or Albert Ostertag or Marjorie Silverman at the Inter-Continental in Chicago, and they will come up with whatever money or service I ask them for." Damonte hastens to add that he will, of course, do the same for them. "*C'est l'honneur professionnel,*" exclaims Rabadán, an enthusiastic Spanish-born polyglot whose hair has turned silver in the service of the Inter-Continental. "There must never be a problem."

Even in less dramatic circumstances than being stranded baggageless and broke in places like Ljubljana or Lyon, the efficiency of these European fixmasters often rebounds upon them: good work makes more work. It is a relatively common occurrence for them to receive calls from, say, Seattle or Buffalo for reservations in Chicago or Boston: when a restaurant or a hotel says "Sorry, we're full-up" to an ordinary petitioner, it might manage to find a spot for Thiault calling from Paris or for Freytag from Munich.

Hanky-panky: it goes on all the time

It is in personal relations that a concierge's skills of diplomacy and improvisation are tested the most keenly—especially in the most personal of all. The vast field of sexual hanky-panky is true concierge territory because it goes on all the time, and because concierges are the ones who are usually called upon to orchestrate it. For starters, they are adult about it: you can check in with your spouse or your father-in-law or the farmer's daughter, as far as they are concerned, so long as you maintain minimum standards of legality, decorum and cleanliness. After that, you just play it by ear. It can be high good humor, like the time Bartholomäus Kersic, then of the Vienna Hilton, was summoned at 3 A.M. to find a sauna for a very important American captain of industry and the lady friends accompanying him after an evening of jollity in a few of the Viennese clubs where they don't necessarily serve only chocolate. Or it can involve infinitely more subtle subterfuges, like the 12 postcards, successively dated and inscribed with anodyne messages about London business negotiations, that Damonte faithfully mailed day-by-day while his client happily disappeared.

So constant is the presence of sex in a concierge's life that hanky-panky has become a subject of pedagogy at the International Concierge Institute, the training school founded in 1984 in Paris by Jean Gillet, former concierge and manager of the Hotel Meurice. "What do you do if a client arrives late at night with a doubtful lady and he is only booked into a single?" asked one of the professors at a recent oral exam I sat in on. Propose a double for the night and sign her in, was the right answer. But Pierre Porte, who was among the examiners that day, had an even more poignant dilemma to place before his baby concierges.

"If Monsieur X has a room with Madame Y," he warned, "it can be a problem. But then if Madame X arrives, it can be a firecracker. What then?"

"*Un bon concierge, ça glisse,*" observed one of the students in a brilliant flash of inspiration that summed up the entire profession, and that might be loosely

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After a hard day, Freytag (right) and fellow concierge David Langartner unwind over pretzels and beer.

translated: "A good concierge slides like Teflon." The chances are fairly good that Madame X will be with someone's husband. Then the good concierge starts earning his pay: juggling rooms and floors, and biting his nails until at least one of the couples departs.

"The entire palette of human life passes in front of me," says Hans Muderlak, who until his recent retirement was chief concierge of Munich's Grand Hotel Continental. "I see it all," he concedes, "but I am not allowed to speak about it."

During our ten-minute chat, Muderlak simultaneously directs a porter in Italian, confers learnedly in French with a Parisian about the city's best restaurants, checks in a few Germans and assures a certain Mrs. Green of Washington, D.C. that her postcards have indeed been mailed. He departs from his professional reserve enough to tell me about the time he journeyed to a village near Deggendorf in order to pick up five live ducks and airfreight them to a client whose daughter was having a birthday in Miami. He also advises me that on no account must *weisswurst* be placed directly on a hot barbecue, because that was what a Brazilian guest had done with the 300 sausages Muderlak had procured at his request. They exploded.

I don't know whether Muderlak conferred with his client in Portuguese about that particular misadventure, but it is not unlikely, because concierges are renowned for their mastery of many tongues. The two official languages of the Clefs d'Or are French and English, but the majority of the members go well beyond that. The most accomplished linguist of my own acquaintance is Molnar, whose fluent grasp of Hungarian, English, French, German, Italian, Russian, Swedish and Arabic makes him a hotel manager's dream. Even when they do not speak a language fully, European concierges are usually able to get by with a well-chosen selection of key phrases. "You can do wonders with a hundred words," says Rabadán.

Which brings us—alas—to the American scene. I use this mournful tone to introduce the widely held opinion of the Clefs d'Or crowd that the United States simply has not caught on to the concierge game. Not only do many American concierges serenely ignore foreign languages, but all too frequently the staff in Yankee loges are unqualified young pups whom management has placed there because some MBA marketing genius has decreed that having a concierge looks good in the glossy brochures. Real professionals who have spent many years learning the job are so rare in the USA that only three names consistently return to conversations with European Clefs d'Or members: Howard Storm of the Stanford Court Hotel in San Francisco, Jack Nargil of the Four Seasons in Washington, D.C. and Bob Duncan of the Beverly Hills Hotel in Beverly Hills. "But American concierges are wonderful golfers," says Michael De Cozar, master of the loge at the Ritz in London, groping for a compliment.

Never mind. America is a young country, as we keep reminding ourselves, and our hotels doubtless will manage to shape up and become comfortably civilized with the passage of a few more centuries. Meanwhile, I suppose we can take some comfort from the fact that the hotel service of our great historical and onetime ideological rival is even more abysmal than our own and not likely to catch up for a long, long time, either. In the USSR, the only institution approaching the concierge is the gimlet-eyed *dezhurnaya*, the inquisitorial old lady installed at a desk on hotel floors, whose duties are handing you your keys and suggesting by her penetrating gaze that you are guilty of spying at worst or of immoral behavior at best.

Between these two superpowers of awful service, degenerate old Europe stands firm as the beacon of competence in *hôtellerie*, and no one represents that competence better than the concierge. At a time when the world is being assailed with Madonna, McDonald's and $50 sweatshirts that oblige you to advertise somebody's brand of sneakers, when the streets of Paris can be plastered with billboards announcing "*Je mords pour le Whopper*" ("I go for the Whopper"), I am consoled by the fact that not far from the Whopper I can saunter into the cool, calm haven of the Plaza and ask Gérard Thiault if he would mind buying me a town house for my poodle. I know in advance exactly what his response will be. "No problem, sir."

The embodiment of service with a smile, Daniel Roche beams amid splendor of dining room at Hotel Meurice.

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Ohio magic man spoofs his own hobby while, behind him, a statue of Dai Vernon performs sleight of hand.

By Daniel Stashower

The fun of magic is in figuring out how the tricks work

Ken Klosterman does not need a crystal ball to do that; he has an amazing collection of gimmicks and gadgets to consider instead

Everyone knows there's more to magic than meets the eye, but sometimes even professional magicians have a hard time seeing beneath the surface. Take Ken Klosterman. He owns about 20,000 tricks. His latest acquisition is a battered steamer trunk that's supposed to make people disappear. Trouble is, Klosterman hasn't figured out how it works. "There's got to be a secret panel," he says. "Or a trapdoor. Something." Dropping to his knees, he begins digging through the wadded newspaper packed inside the trunk.

Klosterman is the proud possessor of what may be the world's largest private collection of historic magic memorabilia. The items on display in his remarkable "museum" range from the smallest shell-and-pea game to larger-than-life automatons and include equipment once used by such legends of magic as Houdini, Blackstone and Kellar. Klosterman himself is an accomplished sleight-of-hand man, a shrewd acquisitor and a serious student of magic history. At the moment, however, he looks like a kid pawing through a box of cereal, eager to get at the toy surprise.

The trunk is part of a large shipment of vintage props that has just arrived at Venture III, a dusty, well-stocked magic store Klosterman owns in Milford, Ohio, a suburb east of Cincinnati. Five magicians—myself included—are needed just to get it off the delivery truck, and a debate quickly breaks out among us over whether it's a "Chest of Enchantment" or a "Trunk of Mystery." Whatever, it once belonged to the great American magician Howard Thurston, whose

"Wonder Show of the Universe" drew huge crowds on Broadway and around the country in the 1920s.

Thurston liked to tell people that as a boy he had been kidnapped by "Muhammadan mystics," who later tutored him in the magical arts. Actually, he grew up in Ohio, and as a child sold wooden mallets used to tenderize meat. The self-mythologizing went with the territory. In magic, Thurston knew, the mystique was every bit as important as the tricks. Magic was a show, a grand spectacle in which he played the starring role—the man with special powers, the magician.

Thurston played the role to the hilt. In 1924, when President Calvin Coolidge invited him to the White House, he arrived with 22 assistants, and a convoy of trucks carrying props and his own stage and orchestra. Magic was not meant for economy of scale.

Somewhat later, when I was growing up in Ohio, I spent a lot of time on street corners, hoping to be kidnapped by Muhammadan mystics. I practiced my sleight of hand for hours in front of a full-length mirror and hung around in magic stores picking up ideas. I wanted nothing so much as to have a pointed mustache. I tried cultivating, without much success, a mysterious and slightly tragic air. At my peak, I became a minor celebrity at neighborhood birthday parties, and now Thurston's trunk is making me a little restless. I find myself wondering where my top hat is.

After a few minutes, Steve Faris, the curator of Klosterman's collection, manages to locate a suspicious hinged flap at the back of the trunk. Meanwhile, Kenna Thompson, who runs the magic shop for Klosterman, has dug out a 50-year-old magic catalog to solve the pedigree problem—it's a "Chest of Enchantment" after all, designed to make a magician's assistant vanish in a manner that will "startle and amaze the most discerning among us."

It's just another pair of pajamas

Klosterman has been busy digging for other treasures among the packing detritus. He pauses when he uncovers a small cloth bundle. "I guess Thurston must have sold this trunk to Will Rock," he says, referring to a magician whose show "Rock presents Thurston's Mysteries" used many of the master's illusions. He points to a hand-lettered note pinned to the bundle. It reads: "Will Rock's pajamas." Klosterman laughs and sets them aside. "Already got a pair," he says.

He may not be joking. Over the years, Klosterman has bought up countless collections like this one. Most of the items he sells off through his shop. A few choice pieces—a Houdini escape trunk, for instance, or an ornate headdress once worn by the Chinese conjurer Ching Ling Foo—will go into his own exhibit rooms. Klosterman's collection, which he calls the Salon de

Visitors must pass through mine shaft and a vault door to enter plush parlor of Klosterman's Salon de Magie.

Photographs by Henry Groskinsky

The Salon that tells the story of magic

Magie, is extraordinary. He not only acquires rare apparatuses; he also tries to preserve the spirit of magic's heyday. His Victorian parlor captures the elegance of gaslit music halls, while the Egyptian Chamber, decorated with hieroglyphic murals, celebrates the ancient roots of magic, when magicians were thought to enjoy the favor of the gods. "It's not enough to pull together a big pile of tricks," Klosterman says. "I want people to get a sense of the tradition of magic."

At his 230-acre farm in Loveland, 30 miles northeast of Cincinnati, Klosterman is anxious to get cracking. Leading me through a small pack of Jack Russell terriers, he heads down a flight of stairs to an old-fashioned wooden elevator car, which conveys us to a subterranean lair complete with moving walls, secret passageways and a miniature theater. The effect, as Klosterman swings open the heavy steel door of an old bank vault, is like stepping into a gigantic toy chest. There are magic tricks everywhere—in trunks, on tables, hanging from the ceiling. A vicious-looking ripsaw blade, used to cut people in two, leans against a wall. A 19th-century magician's table stands in one corner, its wooden surface pitted with spring-loaded trapdoors for vanishing flower pots, water jugs and rabbits. Nearby, a wooden head vaguely resembling the Sphinx sits atop a gilded black cabinet filled with a confusion of brass gears, propellers and flashing lights (p. 112). At a spoken command, her wooden hands come to life to wave a set of colored flags, shake a tambourine, select a chosen card. A nearby poster asks, "Is She Mechanical or Soul?"

Display cases lining several walls are jam-packed with the tools of the trade: flip-lid boxes and brightly painted tubes for causing things to disappear, velvet bags and copper cones for bringing those same things back, talking skulls, floating trumpets, "lucky" dice. Vintage magic posters cover the walls, along with

Replica of King Tut's casket guards magic artifacts in Egyptian Chamber, including a scary talking skull.

photographs and letters bearing the signatures of former headliners, such as Karl Germain, Alexander Herrmann and Buatier de Kolta. Every detail shows a true collector's touch. A framed portrait of Chicago-born mystifier Harry Blackstone sr. has a knotted handkerchief—used in that magician's renowned "Dancing Handkerchief" routine—draped carefully over one corner.

Obviously, only a hopeless oddball would build himself such a secret magical hideaway—right? Actually, the 58-year-old Klosterman seems almost disconcertingly normal. "I'm just a guy who loves magic," he says. "Not just collecting, either. I also love to perform." Indeed, he misses few opportunities to take the stage. His face is familiar around Cincinnati from his

Daniel Stashower is a member of the society of American Magicians. He profiled science fiction publisher Hugo Gernsback in the August 1990 issue.

Spotlit display shows ball-and-vase tricks. Items in the cases at left include card tricks, birdcage, lanterns.

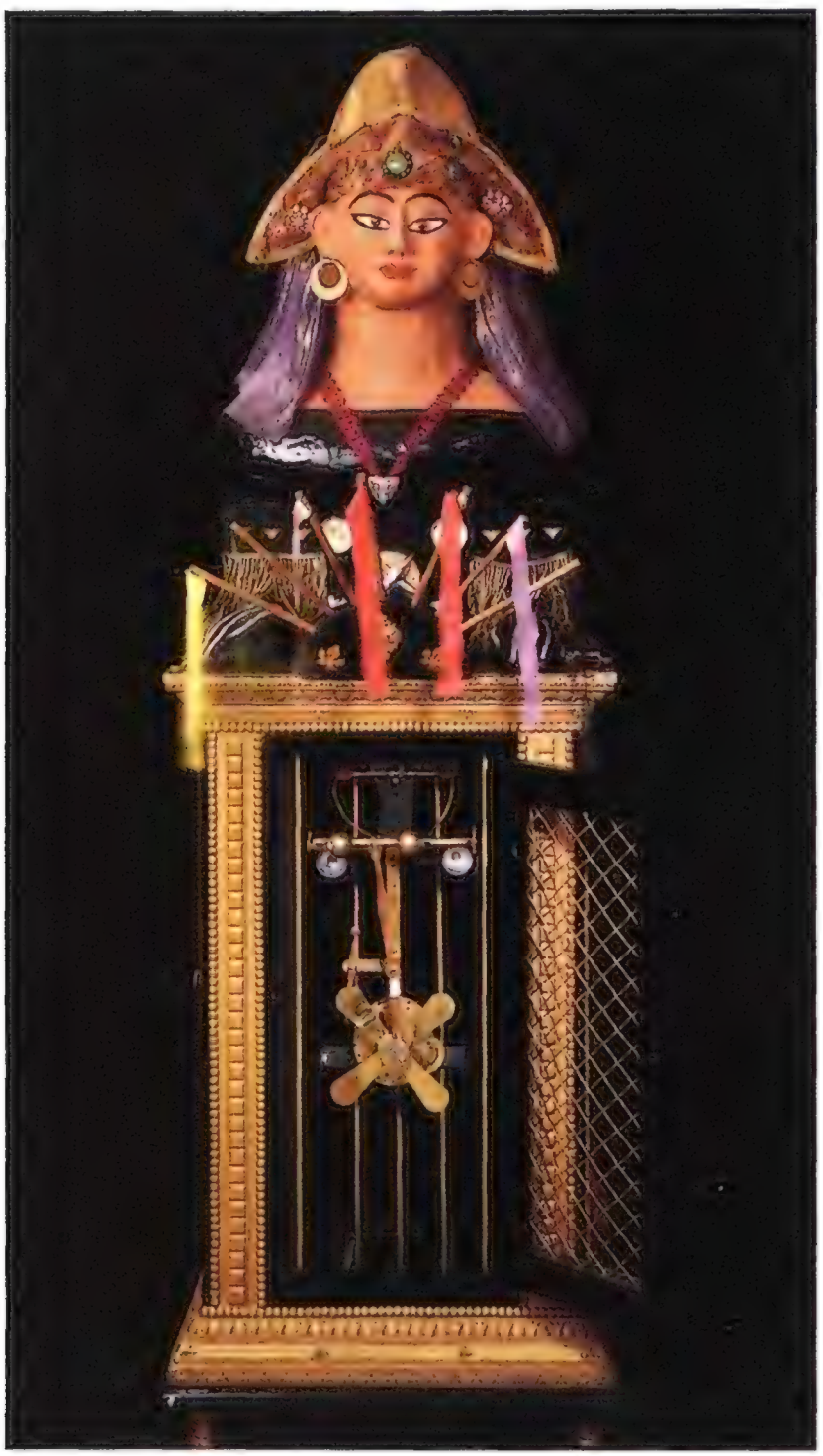
appearances in television commercials for a local building-and-loan association, in which he cheerfully saws up his daughters and produces handfuls of money to the accompaniment of a peppy jingle. Even George Bush, at a 1988 campaign fundraiser, was treated to an impromptu display. Much to the agitation of Bush's Secret Service detail, Klosterman brandished a deck of cards and told the candidate to pick a card, any card. The future President turned to Klosterman's wife, Judy, and asked, "How do you put up with this?"

Klosterman's friends and family have been putting up with it since he was 9 years old. That was the year his Uncle Jack caused a penny to vanish before his very eyes. Soon Klosterman became an avid magician himself, even turning professional in his 20s and claiming prizes with an act that featured vanishing and reappearing doves. His stage career lasted only briefly. Then, as he recalls with some regret, it came time to turn respectable and join the family baking business.

Klosterman calls Robert-Houdin's Light and Heavy Chest "the world's most important piece of magic."

Klosterman prospered, but after suffering a heart attack in 1978, he decided to ease up a little and spend more time indulging his passion for magic.

"Let me show you something," he says, dragging me away from an antique vanishing birdcage. "You have to see this." Klosterman pauses before a massive oak hall rack, complete with twin stools bracketing a floor-length mirror. "See that knob?" he asks. "Turn it clockwise." With a sharp click, the long mirror pops inward like a door. "Pretty good, huh?" Klosterman says. "Judy found it for me in an antique shop. It was once used in a house of ill repute." The open mirror leads to a whole new magic cache, but Klosterman heads straight for the dullest-looking item in the room: a small wooden cash box with battered metal fittings. Everything becomes clear when I see the hand-lettered label, which reads "Light and Heavy Chest." The box (p. 111) is the closest thing magic has to a Holy Grail. It is said to have belonged to the legendary French conjurer Jean Eugène Robert-Houdin, a gifted clockmaker whose formal style of dress and mechanical marvels established him as the father of modern magic.



Sphinx-like "Mysterio" shook flags and worked gears supposedly by magic. In fact, a helper was inside.

"There's an incredible story that goes with this," says Klosterman, lifting the mahogany chest out of its glass case. "In 1856, there was an uprising in North Africa by the Marabouts, a religious group that supposedly practiced magic. They wanted to convince the leaders of Algeria's desert tribes to break their ties with France. Napoleon III sent Robert-Houdin as his envoy, to see if he could somehow put down the rebellion.

"Robert-Houdin essentially did a magic show for the tribes, but his tricks were meant to demonstrate France's strength," Klosterman goes on. "He produced cannonballs from an empty hat, to show the power of the army. Then he pulled flowers from the same hat, to show that he also controlled nature. But the big trick was this one, the Light and Heavy Chest.

"He said to them, 'Look, a baby can pick this up, but at my command, your strongest man will lose his strength and be unable to lift it.' A big, strong Arab came up to the stage and lifted the box easily. Robert-Houdin then challenged him to try it again, saying, 'Now you are weaker than a woman.' Sure enough, this time the strongman couldn't budge it. The leaders saw that and decided not to mess with France."

It was a magnetic performance

The amazing thing is, it all worked by electricity. Klosterman opens the chest and peels back its brown paper lining. Beneath lies a sheet of iron. "Robert-Houdin had installed a strong electromagnet under the stage. At his signal an assistant backstage threw a switch that turned on the magnet. When the power was on, the box was absolutely stuck to the stage. The thing even had an electric shocking device wired to the handle. After the Arab had been struggling for a while, Robert-Houdin threw a little jolt into him. Apparently that sent the poor guy running from the theater." Klosterman replaces the chest and pulls the glass case closed. "Remember, all this happened in the middle of the 19th century. Electricity wasn't all that common. To them, this was real magic."

What, exactly, is magic?

Quite simply, it's the ability to perform wonders. Its origins go back as far as 2500 B.C. An Egyptian wall painting from that period shows a conjurer performing a cup-and-ball trick. Primitive magical devices found in ancient temples include Egyptian idols that "spoke" by means of concealed tubes, and

Trick boxes circa 1920 make a die disappear (top, left), fill up with scarves (bottom left) and cause a playing card (center) to turn up inside a magically inflated balloon.

Greek temple doors that opened when fires were ignited on altars.

Nowadays, magic takes more familiar forms: a top-hatted showman causing his assistant to float above the stage, or a street performer making coins disappear. It's easy to dismiss such marvels in a phrase—"It's all done with mirrors" or, worse, "It's up his sleeve." Actually, the once popular mirror, carefully angled to conceal large objects or apparatuses behind a reflection of stage curtains, has fallen into disuse, and the notion of the sleeve as a magical repository was always vastly overrated. In truth, the mechanics of magic, which can be uncovered in any library, are almost beside the point. Most magical effects, whatever the gimmick, owe their success to pure stagecraft. Presentation and timing take up where mirrors and trapdoors leave off. Deception is the name of the game.

The most important skill in any conjurer's repertoire is misdirection—the fine art of prompting an audience to look elsewhere at a critical moment. Watch closely the next time a magician brings out a deck of cards. If he snaps his fingers or makes an extravagant gesture with one hand, keep your eyes on the other hand. But misdirection is not necessarily that subtle. One performer, wishing to distract his audience while he spirited an assistant offstage, came up with an infallible bit of business: at the essential moment, a gorilla rode a unicycle across the stage.

Reginald Scot, an Englishman, was among the first to offer a discussion of the principles of magic. In a treatise called *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, published in 1584, he tried to show that witchcraft did not exist. At the time, it was commonly believed that sleight-of-hand performers received assistance from the devil. Scot hoped that his rational explanations of seemingly sorcerous happenings would combat a widespread witch-hunting craze. Scot's manual exposed such gimmicks as a "John Baptist" decapitation maneuver employing two men, a trick table and lots of smeared "blood" to gruesome effect.

As the work of Scot and others dispelled magic's supernatural taint, the craft gained acceptance as entertainment. Today it is difficult to appreciate how popular magicians were in the 18th and 19th centuries. Robert-Houdin had been a national celebrity even before his expedition to Algeria. Scottish magician John Henry Anderson (known as "the Wizard of the North") and the Italian showman Chevalier Pinetti (famous for his "thumb-tie" trick) commanded huge fees and enjoyed worldwide reputations.

In 1873, John Nevil Maskelyne established a more-or-less permanent base for magicians in a London museum known as Egyptian Hall. Magicians had performed at Egyptian Hall before Maskelyne, but during his 30-year run there the acts he brought in made his "Home of Mystery" a major showcase and proving

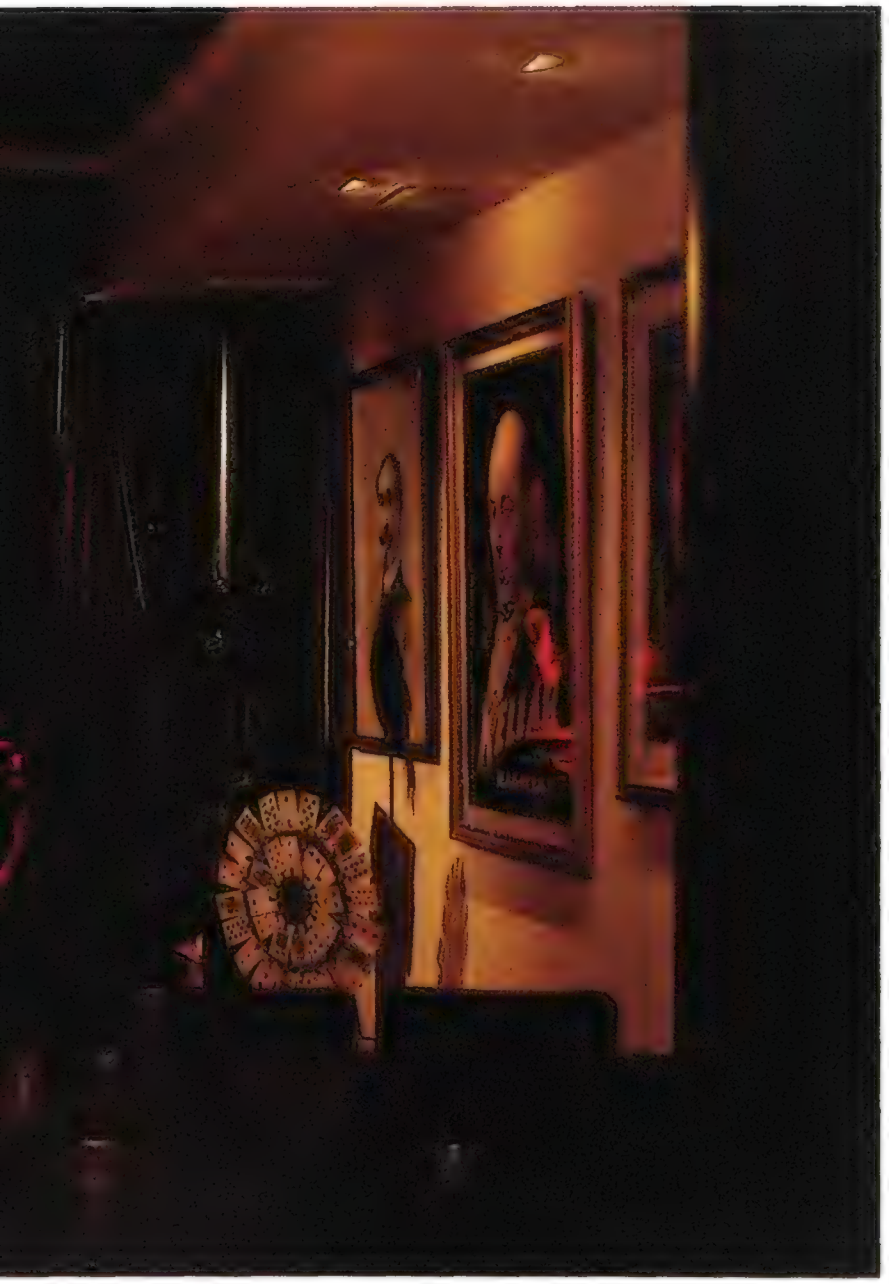
Japanese automaton is displayed atop Harry Kellar's trick table, next to vanishing lamp (on stand, right).

ground. One celebrated performer was the eccentric Frenchman Buatier de Kolta, who created a sensation with his L'Escamotage en Personne Vivante, or Vanishing Lady. An assistant, seated on a fragile-looking chair and covered with a large silk cloth, vanished in the twinkling of an eye. To allay suspicions of a trapdoor, de Kolta carefully covered the stage with a newspaper at the outset of the trick. Few in the audience suspected that the newspaper, as well as the stage, had an artfully concealed trapdoor.

At the turn of the century, the booming popularity of vaudeville in this country created a tremendous demand for acts that would fit into a revue format, and magicians helped fill the bill. Perhaps the biggest stars of that era were Harry Kellar, the "Dean of Magic," and his successor, Howard Thurston. But even their fame paled alongside that of America's "King of Handcuffs," the incomparable Harry Houdini. He was born in Budapest, Hungary, in 1874, the son of a rabbi. His real name was Erik Weisz. He was working as a tie cutter in New York City and learning magic on the side when he adopted the stage name Houdini, after his idol, Robert-Houdin. He was a talented magician but became famous for his skill as an escape artist. Through careful study of locksmithing and rigorous physical training, Houdini learned to release himself from handcuffs, packing crates, straitjackets and all sorts of other physical constraints—including, once, an outsize football.

Houdini's career is well represented in the Salon de Magie. "He was incredible," Klosterman says. "He could hold an audience spellbound while essentially nothing was going on. He often performed his escape acts behind a screen. The audience couldn't even see him, yet the tension was so great that people would be on the edge of their seats." Klosterman leads me to one of Houdini's "escape chairs" (p. 117). Manacles and chains that held the deft performer's arms and legs are bolted into the chair's heavy planks. "This was a pretty good escape," he says. "Houdini would sit down and have audience members truss him up, even wrap the chains around him for good measure. Then his assistants would pull screens around him and he'd escape."

Klosterman leans down and grips one of the manacles on the right side of the chair. "This particular escape had a gimmick. You see this bolt here? It slips out. Houdini could pull his arm free of the chair. He was still tied up and he still had plenty of locks to open, but that little bit of slack gave him a big headstart. Obviously he didn't do this all the time; there



Made in France around 1880, magic kit for beginners includes trick bottles, a coin tray and juggling balls.

"Performer" onstage in Salon de Magie is a painted likeness used in séances by the illusionist Karl Germain.

were no back doors when he was hanging upside down over Times Square in a straitjacket, but when the opportunity presented itself, Houdini wasn't too proud to use a shortcut.

"He milked a stunt for all it was worth," Klosterman continues. "Out front, the orchestra would be playing dramatic music, the audience would be getting anxious; backstage, Houdini would have his feet up while he nonchalantly read a newspaper. Then, when the tension peaked, he'd step through the curtains, dripping with sweat, like he'd just pulled off the escape of the century. The story goes that one night he was relaxing with his newspaper, and a stage manager said, 'Harry, be quiet, the audience can hear you turning the pages.' Houdini shrugged and replied, 'Tell the orchestra to play louder.' "

Klosterman collects anecdotes as well as paraphernalia, and in his unceasing quest for authenticity he has even unearthed the original stage patter used in the late 1800s by Harry Kellar, the man who popularized the "Vanishing Lamp" routine. Kellar's words vividly recapture the flamboyant atmosphere of vaudeville: "I have here on this pedestal a copper lamp of antique pattern, which was left to me by a Brahman priest who presides over a shrine in the holy city of Benares, India. . . . Instantaneously, the atoms composing the lamp will be disintegrated by the force of my will and fly through the fourth dimension. . . ."

Klosterman himself is so low-key that he barely qualifies for a trip through the first dimension, yet he continues to work hard (well, more or less hard) at re-creating some of the classic tricks of yore, like Kellar's lamp routine. This explains why he was willing to step in front of a loaded pistol a few years back; he was staging a "Death-defying Bullet-catch" at a magician's conference. This trick, in which the performer appears to pluck a speeding bullet out of the air, is thought by many magicians to be cursed. Even a seemingly foolproof method of pulling it off—John Henry Anderson replaced a real bullet with a foil dummy that broke apart when fired—can go wrong if executed improperly. At least a dozen magicians have been killed attempting the feat.

Klosterman undertook the trick as a tribute to one of his longtime heroes, William Ellsworth Robinson, an American magician who engineered one of the great deceptions of all time. At the turn of the century, an elegant Chinese magician named Ching Ling Foo was enjoying huge popularity and lucrative bookings. Robinson tried to duplicate his success. With the judi-

Magician and escape artist Harry Houdini owned the peacock (left) that struts, displays showy tail feathers and then struts again. The wind-up wonder was made in France in 1860. Selection of Klosterman's Houdini souvenirs (opposite) includes "escape chair," handcuffs and a red-and-white target used in shooting stunts. Crystal casket was owned originally by Houdini's namesake, Robert-Houdin.

cious use of makeup, Chinese robes and a long braided pigtail attached to his shaved scalp, he converted himself into Chung Ling Soo, the "Marvellous Chinese Conjurer." For the next 18 years, he maintained that persona both on stage and off, even employing an "interpreter" for his press interviews.

The bullet-catch was Chung's best-known trick. Amid great pageantry, a pair of marksmen fired muzzle-loading guns at the magician. With a sweep of his hand, Chung snatched the bullets in midflight. Then, on March 23, 1918, something went wrong. When the marksmen fired, the magician staggered backward, clutching his chest. "My God," he cried, "I've been shot! Lower the curtain!" He died in his wife's arms a short time later. Though rumors of an elaborate suicide quickly spread, a faulty gun proved to be the real culprit. Each of Chung's rifles had a false chamber loaded with gunpowder that blocked off the chamber with the bullet. A crack had formed in the false chamber of one of the guns. Each time it was used, a few grains of powder trickled down near the flash hole of the live chamber, eventually building to a fatal charge.

Klosterman's re-creation of the effect, with an appropriately fearsome antique pistol, had a happier outcome. Even so, Charles Reynolds, a magic consultant to television and the theater who was on hand for the performance, had misgivings. "I was scared to death," he says. "In fact, we had a whole roomful of magicians, and they were *all* scared to death. We all know the history of the trick. I could just imagine the gun going off and Ken slumping to the floor." Klosterman insists there was little danger, although he admits to checking the gun thoroughly for cracks beforehand. Still, he thought it best not to tell Judy about the performance until afterward.

Klosterman maintains that the bullet-catch was a onetime affair. For the most part, he's content to stick with his magic research. Another of his collection's secret rooms—this one hidden behind a carefully framed and hinged poster—contains 30 oak filing cabinets, each filled with bulging folders of notes, clippings and correspondence. More and more in recent years, Klosterman has been dipping into the files on earlier collectors of magic. "They were an interesting group," he says. "There was John McManus, the president of Rolls-Royce in America, a concert pianist named Louis Lavassor, and Charlie Larsen, a very successful automobile dealer. In 1938, Larsen went around and bought one of everything from every magic shop in the United States—20,000 pieces of apparatus.

"Once, one of the best collectors, a shirt-collar salesman named Thomas Chew Worthington, wrote to Harry Blackstone sr. asking for something for his collection—something close to him. Blackstone sent back an athletic supporter. You know, a jockstrap." Klosterman laughs. "I have it now, by the way."

More magical, if less intimate, are the 18th- and 19th-century automatons displayed throughout the collection. To the many theatergoers who had never seen a device more elaborate than a clock, they seemed little short of miraculous. Klosterman is especially proud of an exquisite Japanese painter, who sits cross-legged atop a small lacquered box in the Salon's front room. Inside the box is a delicate miracle of wooden cogs, lead weights and silk cords that raise and lower tiny sacks of sand. When set in motion, the painter dips her slender brush and—with the short, confident strokes of a true artist—creates a small masterpiece on a "canvas" of glass. She then deftly tilts the canvas toward the audience for inspection. For Klosterman, the effect is worth a dozen floating ladies. "Of course, there's no trick involved," he says, gazing down at the tiny canvas. "It's just magic."

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When Man's best friend bays at the moon, howling for hours in the night, driving sleepless neighbors to lawsuits, one has to stop and wonder: Why is the miserable cur equipped with this noisy peculiarity?

By Raymond Coppinger and Mark Feinstein

'Hark! Hark! The dogs do bark…' and bark and bark

If barking is an adaptive trait, honed by natural selection, it should have a purpose; a new theory says it's not and it doesn't

Our research lab sits at the top of a hill, back from the main road. It's hard to see from the bottom, but it's all too easy to hear: the lab is home to a dozen dogs. Dogs have many virtues—they are pets, working animals, and to us, a study in behavior and evolution. But there's no getting around the fact that they can be infernally noisy. Day and night, dogs growl, howl, whine, whimper and woof. But more than anything, dogs bark. Barking is loud, noisy, repetitive, easy to locate and hard to ignore. And it can take up a sizable portion of the animal's life. Out in a field, on a cold Minnesota night, we listened to a livestock-guarding dog bark continuously for seven hours. Such an Olympian vocal feat is neither unusual nor, we suspect, record-breaking. Animal behaviorist John Paul Scott once clocked a cocker spaniel that barked 907 times in a ten-minute period. Even a single dog, barking for hours in the night, can drive sleepless neighbors to lawsuits. At their worst, when whole neighborhoods of dogs bark in raucous unison, they can become an official public health problem. Some communities are trying to bring barking under governmental control (along with biting, leash and pooper-scooper laws), and many an entrepreneur has made a bundle selling antibark collars, or sound-activated sprinkler systems designed to hose down a kennel of barking dogs. A television interviewer once asked B. F. Skinner, the behaviorist psychologist, if there was something he couldn't train a dog to do. After a moment's reflection, Skinner responded that it would be nearly impossible to stop a habitual behavior—like barking.

Barking has a long association with the American auditory landscape. In his colorful book *Dogs on the Frontier*, Western historian John Baur devoted many pages simply to descriptions of canine noise in early Western towns. Wrote George Rutledge Gibson, a soldier stationed in Santa Fe during the Mexican War, "If ever the canine species infested a place, they do this. When we first reached here, they literally had possession of the streets, the plaza and the suburbs, and enough can still be found to make a respectable dog town. . . . The whole valley for miles is made to ring with their yelps as far as can be heard, first one commencing below and then another above town, all between answering and keeping up a perpetual bark from sundown to sunrise."

In the 1880s, cities such as Los Angeles suffered alike from noisy plagues of dogs. A travel writer remarked that dogs did "their level best to excel in exercising their vocal organs. . . . The air is filled with the music, and sleep is driven to the mountains, or out to sea."

The dog populations of modern American cities, and attendant noise pollution, can be just as impressive

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and probably just as distressing (though we are more inclined to deal with them by legislation than extermination, a favored technique on the frontier, according to Baur). In a 1973 study of stray dogs in Baltimore, ethologist Alan Beck estimated that the city, with a human population at that time of just under a million, also was home to more than 125,000 dogs—some 43,000 of them "free-ranging." Beck wrote that "in a city filled with unpredictable and uncontrollable noises, dog barking is yet another potential for lowering the quality of life for the urban dweller."

Some 52 million barking dogs are now resident in the United States. Perhaps it's the ubiquity of dogs and their vocalizations, or our weary resignation in the face of them ("Put one ear on your pillow, stick your finger in the other, and hum!" is our neighbor's advice to his wife), but people often find it hard to imagine that barking could be the object of serious scientific research. In fact, animal behaviorists and other scientists have had relatively little to say about dog barking; those who do think about it don't offer much in the way of explanation regarding its copiousness. Once the simple question is broached, however, it turns out to pose a tangle of intriguing problems for the student of animal behavior and evolution.

Consider, for instance, the fact that the domestic dog and the wolf are genetically quite similar. They can interbreed with one another and produce viable, fertile offspring. When scientists look at the basic protein structures of these animals, at their blood or their genes, it is difficult to distinguish between wolves and dogs. Coyotes, for that matter, are only marginally different from their canid sibling species. The three animals have remarkably similar basic morphologies, or body shapes. But when it comes to their vocal behavior, there are striking differences. The three, not surprisingly, have a common vocal repertoire: they howl, growl, snarl and whine—and they can bark. But there the similarity stops.

While the bark is the omnipresent hallmark of the domestic dog, *Canis familiaris*, the coyote and wolf produce it only rarely. In one study, biologist Ronald Schassburger found that, of the 3,256 vocalizations made by captive wolves (*Canis lupus*), a scant 2.5 percent were barks. And even when wild canids do bark, the form of this vocal behavior differs. Where dogs bark in long, rhythmic stanzas, adult wolf and coyote barks tend to be brief and isolated. Wolf pups, on the other hand, will bark repetitively, but no wild canid, we would venture to say, has ever barked for seven hours, or at the rate of more than a bark a second.

The howling of the coyote can be heard long into the night in many places in the American West (and increasingly in the Northeast as well, where a coyotelike canid is becoming prevalent). Thomas Say, a naturalist on explorer Stephen Long's expedition to the Rocky Mountains in 1820, gave the coyote its scientific name, *Canis latrans* (the "barking, howling canid") presumably because of its distinctive and pervasive sound. Coyotes certainly can bark, but Say's nomenclature probably refers more to the high-pitched yips that accompany coyote howling than to doglike barking. When we raised coyotes from puppyhood along with dogs in our lab, the coyotes remained silent and wary even when their kennelmates joined in frenzied, raucous bouts of group barking.

Modern wild dogs (including the Australian dingo, the New Guinea singing dog, the Asian pariah dog and the "barkless" basenji) are howlers that can bark but rarely do so. Unlike wolves and coyotes, our captive New Guinea singing dog *will* join in the noisemaking with barking kennel-

Biologist Raymond Coppinger and linguist Mark Feinstein are on the faculty of Hampshire College, Amherst, Massachusetts.

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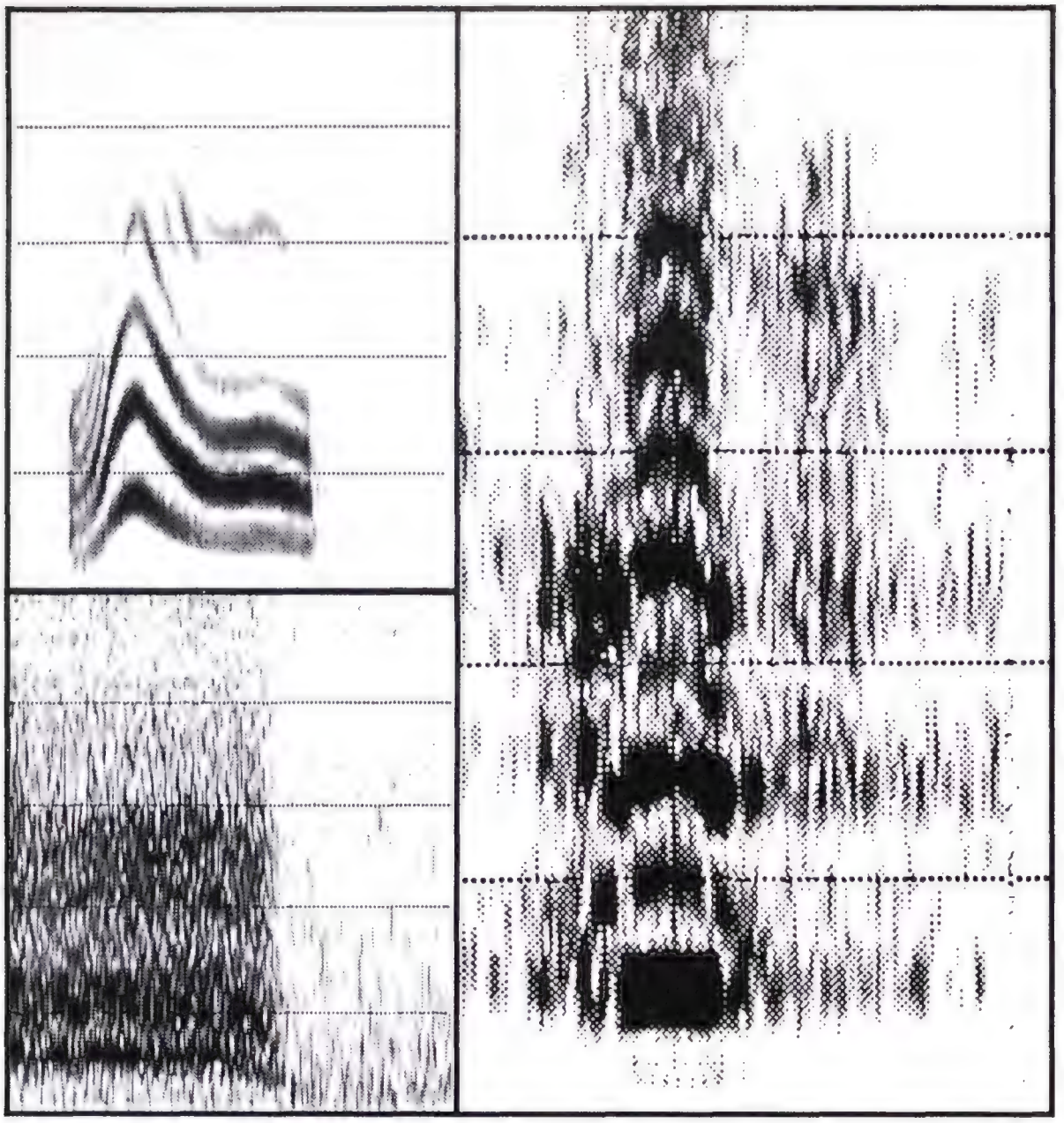

Sound spectrograms of dog vocalizations show rise and fall of a tonal whine or distress call (top left) made by an infant dog, and the noisy growl (bottom left) that usually emerges in an older pup. The bark of a mature dog (right) shows a mixture of aggressive noise and appeasing tones, a call that is found in the wild more frequently in juvenile canids.

mates—but when it does, it produces melodic, yodeling howls rather than characteristic dog barks.

The wolf is very likely the ancestor of the modern domestic dog, although all the evidence is not yet in. But whether the ancestor was a wolf or some other ancient doglike animal, we can surmise with some certainty that the dog's evolutionary precursors did not bark much. So something special must have happened in the course of the dog's evolution to make it such a prodigious barker.

The classical view of evolution is that animals are shaped by natural selection. Small genetic variations are the raw material on which the evolutionary process operates. Selection gradually favors those traits that contribute to the survival of an individual: animals exhibiting such traits will have greater reproductive success than those that do not, and the genes that give rise to the advantageous trait will be passed on in succeeding generations. No matter how complex or how marvelous an animal may appear to us, the conventional view might lead one to expect that each new trait plays an adaptive role in the life of the animal. Whatever body part or behavior we look at—the mammalian eye, the human brain, the hunting patterns of the wolf or the barking of dogs—we are tempted to look for adaptive significance. But our investigations of vocalization in the canid family lead us to believe that evolutionary mechanisms other than direct selection and adaptation are needed to explain the barking behavior of the dog.

A simple selectionist-adaptationist story might begin with the assumption that early humans brought wild canids—wolf pups, probably—into their homes. The most tractable, the least prone to prey on and kill other animals (or eat the baby) were allowed to reproduce, the others killed or let go. But for what reason? There weren't other domesticated animals around in the early Mesolithic period (some 10,000 years ago, when the first skeletal remains of dogs are found in sites of human habitation), so it isn't likely that wolves were tamed to protect or herd livestock.

Alternatively, researchers surmise that wolves might have been brought into villages and homes for help in hunting. Perhaps, some hypothesize, they were bred to provide protection from enemies and used as "canine burglar alarms," as zoologist Desmond Morris put it. But we think there is really very little evidence for any of these accounts of the evolution of the dog.

Most dogs, when you come down to it, can be miserable excuses for an alarm system. Imagine paying thousands of dollars for a high-tech home security system that automatically calls the police every time a car (especially your own!) pulls into the driveway, or that fires off, at unpredictable moments, a dozen times a night—when the moon is bright, when the wind picks up, when a truck rumbles by. It just doesn't make sense to us that people would have painstakingly kept and bred potentially dangerous wolves, so close to hearth and home, just to produce a "dog-that-cries-wolf."

Early preagriculturalists simply had no experience with selective breeding. It stretches the imagination to think that our ancestors began their experiment in domestication by intentionally bringing wolves into their camps and villages. Today when humans interact with wolves, just keeping them around requires something our early ancestors lacked—fences. The most plausible explanation, we believe, is

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that humans had little to do—at least directly—with the process. Early "dogs," we suspect, were scavengers that hung around human habitations, eating human waste products. It is just as likely that humans took equal advantage of the situation, eating the surplus dogs—a situation still seen in parts of the world today. In other words, we think that the wild ancestor of the dog may have largely domesticated itself, entering into a mutually beneficial symbiosis with humans—and is not a product of conscious human selection.

Animal calls typically play a straightforward role in the life of an organism, conveying information about its internal state or triggering specific responses in a hearer. Consider the low, noisy canid growl. You don't need a PhD to understand that the growl is an aggressive signal. Nor is anyone likely to mistake the underlying motivation of a whining, whimpering dog or wolf—here is an animal in some kind of distress. These are animal signals as the popular conception of a "language" would expect them to be: one "word," one meaning, like a simple dictionary. It is not difficult to see how natural selection might operate to develop this kind of signaling behavior. But the dog bark appears in a crazy quilt of contexts, and its basic meaning, if any, is far from clear.

Consider the extraordinary range of commonsense explanations of barking that are offered even by careful observers of dogs. As we've seen, there's the alarm function: the bark is purported to mean, as Morris puts it, that "someone is approaching the gates. . . . The alarm does not yet tell us whether the arrivals are friends or foes, but it ensures that the necessary precautions will be taken." Robert Ardrey claims in his book *The Territorial Imperative* that dogs bark for the same reason humans build fences: the animal is marking and defining its space. Others assert that the bark is a social call—"I'm here!"

The functions abound. A dog barks when it wants to be fed, or let in and out of the house. One dog owner we know claims his dog barks *only* when the "damned neighbor's dogs start yapping." Others have noticed that their dogs bark while playing. And finally, there is the testimony of an old New Englander who hunts rabbits with beagles. "Why do your dogs bark, Rob?" After some reflection, he responds, "Well, just for the hell of it, I suppose."

In short, dog barking presents quite a puzzle—if we think of it as part of an efficient communication system designed by natural selection. When an animal goes to the trouble of expending energy to make a sound, many biologists assume that it must be a signal, an element of a communication system that conveys information

benefiting both the sender and the receiver. In order for a communication system to work, both sending and receiving animals have to "understand" the meaning of the signal.

We don't expect these signals to be wildly ambiguous. It's true that, in some animals, the same signal can have very different functions in differing contexts. When male birds sing, their song appears to have a territory-marking function for other male birds, warning them away. But it also serves to attract female mates, and to maintain the pair-bond relationship. Barking could be a complex example of this kind of context-dependent behavior. But many dogs bark in virtually *every* behavioral context. Natural selection would have to have endowed dogs with an extraordinarily subtle and powerful system of context-interpretation for them to be able to derive so many distinct meanings from a single signal.

This all presumes, of course, that barking is indeed an adaptive signal that was honed by natural selection. But to us dog barking does *not* appear to be communicative: it may not "mean" anything at all. Recall our livestock-guarding dog in Minnesota, isolated at night in a field, that barked continuously for seven hours. There wasn't another dog in sight or earshot for miles around. Certainly no dog or human or other animal responded vocally. There was no sign of predators. Just who or what was receiving this signal? In what sense could it have a "communicative" value? And what selective advantage is there that would drive the dog to pursue such energy-wasting behavior?

Even the acoustic characteristics of the dog bark are something of a mystery from the standpoint of natural selection. The physical properties of vocal signals are often directly related to their function. In many species of birds, for instance, alarm calls given at the approach of flying predators have sound characteristics that are very difficult to locate. You'd expect natural selection to invent a signal that's hard to find; it gets the message across while minimizing danger to the sender. Biologist Eugene Morton at the Smithsonian's National Zoo has proposed some general principles governing the sound-shape of signals in birds and mammals. He argues that vocal signals fall into two classes. Noisy, low-pitched signals convey aggression, hostility or dominance ("This is my bone—go away!"). They cause the receiver to withdraw. By contrast, higher-pitched, tonal signals convey appeasement and submission ("Don't hurt me!") and solicit care ("Mom, I'm lost—come and get me!"). Such signals encourage approach.

To understand how such signals operate, the mammalian reader need only conduct a little thought-experi-

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ment. Imagine that you are standing in front of a cave. You hear a rasping, low growl emanating from the dark. Could be a large bear. Do you want to go in to check things out? But suppose instead you hear a high, melodic, piping sound, not unlike the whimpering of a baby (human or otherwise). A sound like this is likely to tug at your humanitarian heartstrings and move you to go inside to see what is amiss.

Morton thinks that these two classes of signals evolved in the mammals precisely because low, noisy signals are indicative of large, adult animals that may be dangerous or competitive, whereas high, tonal signals suggest small, inoffensive, young animals. That is the reason, perhaps, that some of them seem to be so transparent in meaning to humans, who—mammals that we are—appear to share Morton's "motivational-structural rules."

Why, then, does the meaning of the bark seem so opaque? Barks are not only noisy, they also have a tonal component that is produced by the regular, periodic vibration of the dog's vocal cords. This tone appears in a sound spectrogram as a regular pattern of energy, often with a clear pattern of harmonics, or overtones. Noisy signals, by contrast, exhibit a scattershot, apparently random pattern of energy at many frequencies (see diagrams, page 122). The bark generally has a complex character: an initial period of noise, followed by a tonal portion into which the noise may persist. Furthermore, the pitch of the bark's tone—the rate at which the vocal cords vibrate—can vary greatly. Some dogs have low barks, while others' are high and yelping. Still other dogs have barks with contoured pitches, rising and falling. It's no wonder, then, that dog barks are hard to understand. To a mammalian listener (human or wild animal) a repetitive dog bark can seem to say, "Goawaycomehere! Goawaycomehere! Goawaycomehere!"

Morton has suggested that "mixed" vocalizations like the bark arise from indecision. The animal doesn't know precisely how to act—in effect, it doesn't know whether it is coming or going. It may not seem too surprising that an animal finds itself in this state, from time to time. Even the most highly adapted organism is likely, on occasion, to fail to be able to apply its usual behavioral resources to meet a particular challenge. Thus, one of the few times we've heard wolves bark was near the end of an exhausting but not yet conclusive dominance fight. Normally, an adult wolf has a highly effective set of behaviors when it goes into such a fight: it knows when to assert itself, when to back off, how aggressively to bite. It's plausible to think that the animal might be in a state of temporary indecision when these normal behaviors fail to accomplish a successful result.

But the dog appears, in this view, to exist in a virtually perpetual state of indecision—unable to cope with even the smallest changes and challenges in its environment. What kind of evolutionary change driven by the selective forces of normal Darwinian evolution could account for such a seemingly maladapted animal?

It is not easy for biologists to view the processes of evolution close up, on a time scale that allows us to gain insight. But occasionally, an experiment with artificial selection will provide a useful picture of what may have occurred in nature. One landmark experiment of this kind has actually

After generations of mating tractable foxes, the result was a tame "dog-fox."

been carried out with wild canids—foxes—and we think it may provide some clues to the mystery of barking. Indeed, this largely unheralded experiment might well be regarded as one of the century's most intriguing systematic investigations of the nature of evolutionary processes.

About 30 years ago, a group of Soviet biologists, led by the late Dmitry K. Belyaev at the Institute of Cytology and Genetics at Novosibirsk in Siberia, were raising and studying the silver fox, an animal that is farmed for its fur. Wild foxes are not easy animals to handle down on the farm. They are aggressive, tend to avoid human contact and are likely to try to escape from captivity. These are tendencies that an efficient fox farmer might well want to alter. But conventional methods of training and behavioral management do not seem to do the trick: you can't tame a normal fox simply by changing its environment. Belyaev's group instead decided to manipulate the genetic characteristics of the fox in an attempt to breed some of these problems out of their animals.

To do so, they selected those animals that exhibited some docility in their interaction with humans, breeding the tamest foxes to each other. After about 20 generations (about two decades, a remarkably brief time in normal evolutionary terms), Belyaev and his coworkers found that they had created a new animal. The transformed fox now approached humans rather than fleeing from them, and greeted them with tail-wagging, face-sniffing and licking. But it was more than a docile silver fox—the animal had also changed physically. Some of Belyaev's foxes now sported floppy ears rather than the prick-ears of an adult fox. Rather than the single estrous cycle, the period of mating and reproduction typical of wild canids, Belyaev's animals went into heat twice a year—a characteristic of domestic dogs. They developed multicolored coats. In many ways, it looked as though Belyaev had evolved a "dog-fox." Not only did this new animal have the temperament, physiology and physical appearance of a domestic canid, but as Belyaev put it, "they even sound like dogs."

Transformed fox approaches humans now, rather than fleeing from them.

Why should this entire new package of traits—anatomical, physiological and behavioral—have emerged without direct selection for anything but tameness? The answer, we think, is that tameness is a general characteristic of juvenile animals. Canid pups (whether wolf, fox, coyote or dog) readily form social bonds, even with members of other species. They seek out contact and care, rather than withdrawing from it. And as we mentioned earlier, all wild canid pups are generally noisier than adults, and barking in pups is significantly more frequent than it is in adults. As the wild animal matures and develops normal adult behavior, it gradually loses these puppy characteristics. Growth patterns are under genetic control: as genes "turn on" in the course of development, and other genes "turn off," the organism changes.

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These processes are determined by regulatory genes, which control the schedule of the organism's overall growth and the rate at which its individual parts grow.

Any change in the timing of these regulatory genes is referred to by biologists as heterochronic (which comes from the Greek *hetero-*, "different," and *chronos*, "time"). Heterochronic evolutionary mechanisms can speed up the rate at which an animal grows from newborn into adult, or slow down the rate, so much so that a heterochronically slowed animal may not attain its "normal" full adult form. When Belyaev went about selecting for tameness, we believe he was actually slowing down the fox's rate of development—altering the animal's rate of maturity so that, effectively, he kept his animals perpetually young. It is young animals that solicit care, that bond to others around them, that don't exhibit the typical adult's propensities for aggressive defense of territory or its claim on dominance in a social hierarchy, that are not too touchy about interacting with members of another species.

From this point of view, we can think of Belyaev's dog-fox—and the domestic dog in general—as an animal stuck in a middle ground between infancy and wild adulthood. It retains some juvenile characteristics even as it becomes sexually mature (an altered pattern of sexual maturity, to be sure, since the dog-foxes come into heat more often), and it fails to attain, or only partially develops, other behavioral traits that would emerge in the normal life of an adult fox. Belyaev, of course, induced this kind of heterochronic change experimentally, although he was conscious of selecting only for tameness.

Earlier, we suggested that humans were probably not direct, conscious agents of the dog's domestication. But "self-selection" for tameness would just as readily have naturally produced an animal well suited to living as a scavenger and camp follower among human beings, because of a general change leading to the "juvenilization" of growth patterns. Potential variability in shape and color, additional estrous cycles, increased juvenile vocal behavior—including barking—all these characteristics of the dog have simply emerged as part of the heterochronic bargain.

If the dog is an adolescent in a state of change—reproductively capable but not yet endowed with the full physical and psychological maturity of a "real" adult—we expect it to behave in ways that look maladaptive or nonfunctional. All mammals go through a period of growth and change that we are inclined to call a metamorphosis, a dramatic remodeling of the animal from a highly specialized and adapted infant into an equally (but differently) specialized adult. Heterochronic change—an example is selection for juvenile traits—can freeze the species in mid-metamorphosis, and this is precisely what we think happened in the evolution of the dog. Its capacities consist partly of leftovers from infancy, and partly of slowly developing adult traits—some of which will never fully emerge, as heterochronic retardation holds their onset at bay.

The dog, for instance, never develops all the normal adult maternal behaviors that we see in the wolf: the mother dog will nurse her pups, but it is not common for her to provide other food for them. Nor does the dog develop the wild canid's full pattern of hunting and predatory behavior. Instead, it plays out bits and pieces of such behavior in what appears to us as random "play."

The extravagance and apparent meaninglessness of dog barking are, we think, simple consequences of the fact that the dog remains a metamorphic adolescent for life. Wolf, coyote and dog pups alike exhibit recognizable barks by the time they are a month or so old. The infant pup's vocal signals are overwhelmingly tonal—whines and whimpers of alarm

and distress. As the animal matures, these calls recede and are replaced by increasingly frequent noisy adult signals like growls. But the metamorphosing canid, in very much the same way that it organizes bits and pieces of waning infant behavior and growing adult behavior together into play, tends to mix together its infant tonal and adult noisy behaviors. The result, arising from no particular adaptive need and serving no specific function, is the bark.

We think that when dogs bark they are effectively doing the same kind of thing they do when they chase balls or their own tails. These are all behaviors that serve no real function in the animal's life, but that it nevertheless is likely to repeat over and over and over—byproducts of a heterochronic change. Dogs were no more selected to bark than they were to chew on an old slipper. That's not to say, however, that these characteristics brought about by juvenilization might not end up serving a purpose in the animal's life, so we think that Eugene Morton is correct in claiming that vocalizations like barking are motivated by indecision. Given their acoustic nature, sounds like barks *should* be confusing to mammals. It's plausible that the ability to confuse and to stave off conflict would fortuitously turn out to be of benefit to a maladapted, juvenilized animal.

And dogs may *learn* to bark, adapting this initially functionless behavior to meet new problems in life for which natural selection has provided no stereotyped signal—for example, when they want to be let into or out of the house, or when they want food or just some attention. Indeed, juvenile animals generally tend to be better learners than adults.

But in our view, dogs don't bark because human beings bred them to. Nor did natural selection specifically shape the dog to be a barker. Barking in dogs, we think, simply came along as part of a whole package of changes wrought by a genetic alteration in the timing of the life cycle of the ancestral canid. Stuck in adolescence, the dog barks so much because barking is what a *juvenile* canid does. The old New England farmer walking up the road with his beagles may have come closest to the truth when he concluded that dogs bark "just for the hell of it."

Free to roam about, a tame fox peers through window of the Institute of Cytology and Genetics, in Siberia.

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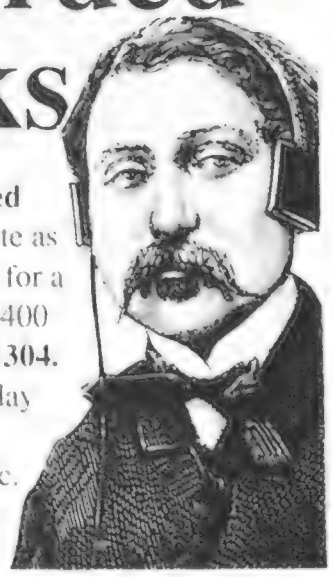

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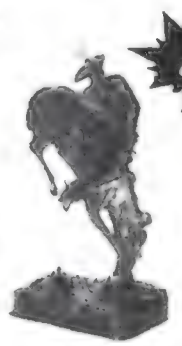

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Book reviews

Living at the End of Time
John Hanson Mitchell
Houghton Mifflin, $19.95

"O solitude! . . . I never triumph so as when I have the least success in my neighbor's eyes." So wrote Henry David Thoreau, after moving to the rustic cabin he had built in the Massachusetts woods near Concord.

A little more than a century later, author and naturalist John Mitchell built his own cabin in Massachusetts. And, like Thoreau, he has written an engrossing memoir of the experience.

The similarities between Thoreau and Mitchell nearly end there. Young Henry was a lifelong "bachelor of thought and nature," according to his friend Ralph Waldo Emerson. Mitchell is a more convivial soul, motivated to try his back-to-nature experiment more by the exigencies of divorce and budget than a craving for solitude.

And where Thoreau built his rustic cabin in the deep woods by Walden Pond, Mitchell fashioned a homier, meadow's-edge shelter, with gewgaws and frills inspired by Victorian architect Andrew Jackson Downing's designs, and complete with insulation, antique organ and composting toilet.

The borders of Mitchell's domain are well defined here and eloquently drawn; he is in the midst of a rich and varied habitat frequented by coyotes, fox and deer, along with several bizarre and touching outcasts—among them a wispy elderly gardener, a stubborn homeless drunk, a foraging couple of war refugees, and a mysterious man of the wilds. And Mitchell is within a short walk of the Digital Equipment Corporation computer complex that represents the inexorable technical progress he variously admires and abhors.

He's even closer to the unspoken emotional pull of his former home, still occupied by his ex-wife and children. At one point Mitchell describes (without naming) Thoreau—and obliquely, himself—to a psychologist friend. "This poor guy has a serious character disorder," she responds, maybe "only a step away from psychotic." We, however, are more likely to see Mitchell as a man enjoying the winter of his content—"The wind shot at the eaves beyond the loft, limbs snapped and fell. . . . But I was happy." If not inclined to extend his experiment indefinitely, he is sufficiently comfortable with himself and his setting to consider the real and surreal world rather than his own psyche, or the unfamiliar business of getting by without most 20th-century comforts.

If Mitchell embarked with a "true Thoreauvian journey, an exploration of the private sea of being alone," in mind, he has brought back a very different memoir, an exploration of time and space, not mind and emotion.

This book abounds with eclectic observations and anecdotes, among them a midwinter getaway to visit the Puerto Rican villagers who live hard by the giant Arecibo observatory, people like Mitchell, clinging to traditions in a bewilderingly technological environment. He tells poetic stories of writer Lafcadio Hearn's fascination with the legends and landscape of Japan. Mitchell gives us as well a fascinating insight into Thoreau the inventor and businessman, drawn in parallel with the portrait of iconoclastic Digital founder and chief executive officer, Kenneth Olsen.

But *Living at the End of Time* draws its strength, as Mitchell appears to, from his peculiar, almost mystical ability to read the human effects, past and present, upon a landscape. Mitchell travels imaginatively in time, and so his thoughts and graceful writing are best applied to plumbing the historic depths of a single locale. Here we learn anew about Indian legends, ruined dwellings and abandoned gardens, all of which leave their mark on the land he calls home.

Mitchell put this talent to excellent effect once before, providing a 15,000-year account of life on and around the humpbacked ridge behind his cabin, in his captivating book *Ceremonial Time* (SMITHSONIAN, September 1984).

After reading *Ceremonial Time*, I visited that ridge and found to my disappointment that it seemed far less mysterious, less varied, less impressive than in Mitchell's writing. At first I ascribed the disappointment to the clash between reality and the imagination-charging power of Mitchell's writing. Only later did I realize that all that he sees on his ridge—the evidence of generations of lives led—is indeed there, invisible to less perceptive eyes than his.

While most of us live determinedly in the present, Mitchell wanders through it, putting the lie to his book's title. He is acutely aware of his gift. "Sometimes I have a feeling that this place, this actual spot where we are sitting is the center of the universe. It seems to me that anything can happen here—the beginning and the end . . ."

This time round it is the shadowy people as much as the place that haunt the reader long after the reading's done. Were I to encounter them, no doubt, I'd fail to draw, as Mitchell does, the meaning they all take from the land. Perhaps they don't even exist, as Mitchell concedes: "I believe that we are all reflections of one another, and that the people I knew that year, the experiences I had, and the landscape in which I lived were all in fact an extension of myself, an invented, imaginary world."

Whether invented or simply invisible to others, the people and places that

Mitchell's plans for Thoreauvian cabin gave way to "a lot of gingerbread trim."

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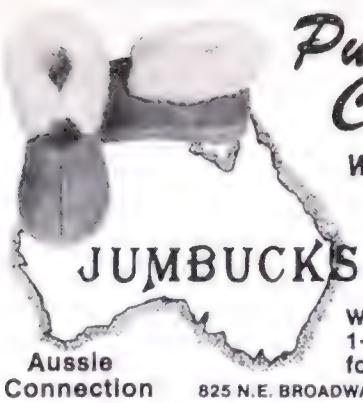

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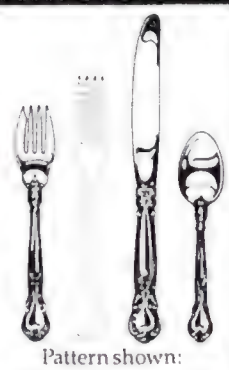

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make up John Mitchell's world are entrancing. We are fortunate to have him as a guide.

Don Lessem
Massachusetts author and critic

Boomer
Railroad Memoirs
Linda Niemann
University of California Press, $19.95

When Linda (Gypsy) Niemann answered the newspaper ad—BRAKEMEN WANTED—the trainmaster told her, "Now, you're going to hear bad language out here." He didn't know the lady very well.

Gypsy brought her own bad language with her, bad habits, bad everything. She saw the railroad job as a break from a lifetime of schooling, a chance to halt her downward slide into booze and drugs and failed relationships. She felt that by doing dangerous work and hanging onto the sides of boxcars, she would be hanging onto life itself, a more secure, fulfilling life.

Gypsy wasn't the only woman hired that day in Watsonville, California (of the 17 members of her class, 3 were women), but she was the only one who came equipped with a PhD.

The first order of business was two weeks of classroom instruction during which the new hires studied a huge book of rules whose main purpose was to prevent trains from crashing into each other. On the final day the students were taken to the local freight yard to practice "getting on and off moving cars, climbing the ladders and cranking down the handbrakes . . . and hand and lantern signals." Next came the "derail," a 60-day probation in which, despite terror and ridicule, the rookie "rails" tried to make sense of what they'd been taught, use it and stay alive.

Gypsy did well. No derails were logged against her. She graduated and began working the "extra board"—railroadese for a rotating list of available brakemen—as a "boomer," a brakeman who seeks work in areas of the country that are booming economically. Dates of seniority, assigned by the drawing of numbers on graduation day, become the most important factor in a railroader's career, enabling a boomer, for example, to "bump" any "homeboy," or local employee, with less seniority. It's a chain-reaction system destined to keep boomers on the move.

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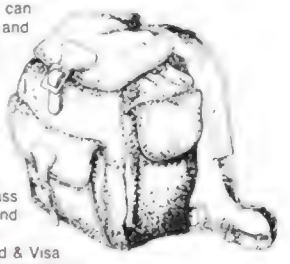

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Amid the graffiti of the railroad yard, Niemann got her life back on track.

It kept Gypsy moving. She traveled from Watsonville to El Centro to Los Angeles, over to Houston and back to Tucson. Though she gradually learned her craft (she insists it's a craft and not a job), the attitudes of the men she worked with kept chipping away at her sense of identity. It was a Catch-22 thing. A real woman wouldn't do this kind of work, went the argument, therefore if she masters it she can't be much of a woman. And to be *bumped* by one, well, that was a double insult.

Full of coarse, train-yard jargon, Niemann's prose can quickly turn poetic: "Soft drips melted off switch stands and padded into pools of oily water like little lakes. . . . The yard lights were fuzzy, yellow balls hung in the fog." And she's poet enough to look up from the tracks and describe the country she loves as "chocolate mesa fingers washed in lavender distances . . . Navajo sandstone bluffs turned on a lathe."

These are not the recollections of an outdated myth figure like Casey Jones (who's probably turning over in his grave), but the writings of a modern young woman trying to find herself through physical labor. By her own definition she is an intellectual who looks like a bimbo; she is a bisexual who doesn't fit stereotypes, and a middle-class woman living a working-class life. "In between the cars," she writes, "my body inches from the wheels, I was powerless and vulnerable."

She begins to booze it up again. Getting off graveyard shift, many of the crew would head for the hangout tavern, where by 8 A.M. they'd be loaded.

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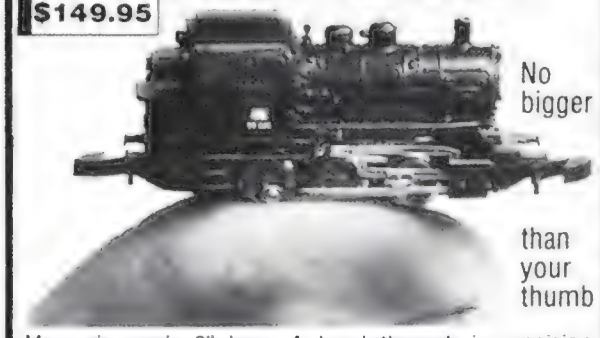

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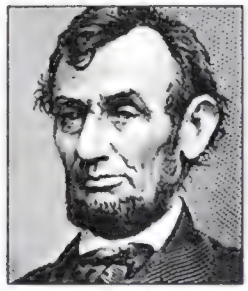

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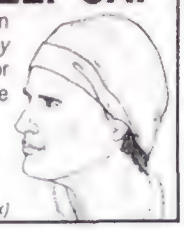

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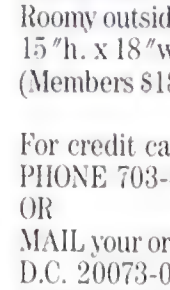

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Then it's hit the sack and sleep it off, for boomer rule number one is never go to work drunk; it could kill you. "I was living in an endless cycle of hope and disappointment," she writes, "hope that things would change, disappointment that they didn't; hope that a drink would fix things, disappointment at another hangover. . . ."

As you've probably surmised, there is a spiritual journey running parallel to the mainline narrative track.

Following a particularly devastating binge in California, Gypsy joins a work train in Utah and goes on the wagon. Struggling against the stark truths of sobriety, fleeing them, she booms in New Mexico and West Texas. It's a transient life, as lonely as the whistle of the trains she rides. Finding courage in her very isolation, she dries out between trains, sitting work-exhausted in empty motel rooms in dusty desert towns the railroad has helped keep alive. It was a long, difficult process, but Gypsy Niemann was determined. She recalls a switchman once saying to her, "'You don't give up easy, do you?' *Easy?* I never gave up."

Finally, victoriously, after eight years, it's home to California and "new track" for Gypsy Niemann, at a time, ironically, when automation was turning her craft into a job.

This isn't your standard railroad yarn. This is autobiography up close and private, a memoir so personal that it becomes onstage drama complete with story line and conflict and characters who've been given lines to speak and who carry outrageous rail-yard monikers. It's a sometimes crude, always vivid book guaranteed to add new meaning to the old song "I Been Workin' on the Railroad."

William Dieter
Denver novelist

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Additional reading

Artificial reality (p. 36)

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(Supplies are very limited, please respond before January 31, 1991.)

Penguin Book of Modern Yiddish Verse, edited by Irving Howe, Ruth Wisse, Khone Schmeruk, Viking Penguin, 1987

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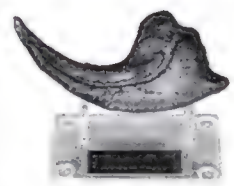

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Smithsonian highlights

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Freer remains closed

The Freer Gallery of Art is closed until late 1992. See *Around the Mall*, page 22.

Musical Weekend

Highlights of the 19th Smithsonian Musical Weekend, May 10-12, will include dinner at the Museum of African Art and the Renwick Gallery; a National Symphony concert at the Kennedy Center, conducted by Sir Neville Marriner; a private performance by the Smithsonian Chamber Players; and a champagne breakfast in the Bird House at the National Zoo. To obtain additional information, write: Musical Weekend, Box 11271, Washington, D.C. 20008.

The Smithsonian at Peabody Concert Series

The Smithsonian's Division of Musical History and the Peabody Conservatory of Music announce a special series of concerts by the Smithsonian's period-instrument ensembles. Smithsonian musicians also will offer a series of master classes at Peabody.

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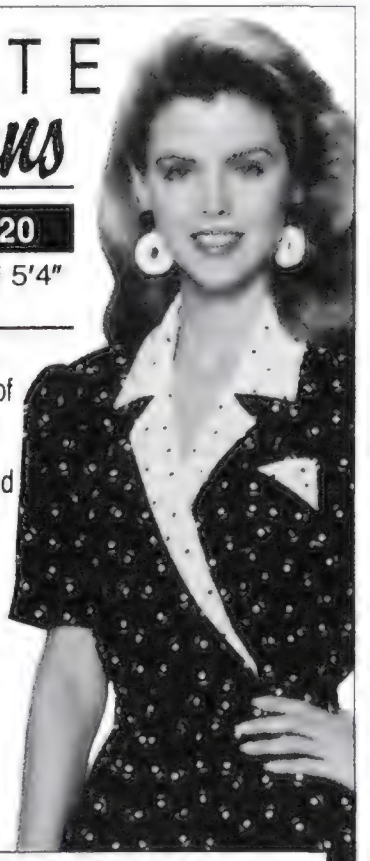
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The Smithsonian Chamber Players will perform in Baltimore at Peabody on February 2 and March 6. The Smithsonian Chamber Orchestra will perform at Peabody on May 13.

Tickets can be purchased through the Peabody Box Office at (301) 659-8124 (weekdays only) or by writing to: Smithsonian at Peabody, 1 East Mount Vernon Place, Baltimore, Maryland 21202. For information on master classes, call (301) 659-8164.

Special January exhibits and events

International Gallery
S. Dillon Ripley Center
Moscow: Treasures and Traditions (through February 3) A major exhibition of icons, paintings, porcelains, costumes and metalwork. See *Highlights continued*, page 140.

National Museum of Natural History
Healing a River: 50 Years in the Life of the Potomac (through January 25) A show commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin.
Shark! Fact and Fantasy (through January 20) Comprehensive look at sharks and their behavior.

Cooper-Hewitt Museum (New York)
Gold of Greece: Jewelry and Ornaments from the Benaki Museum (through January 13) Objects from the Athens museum.

National Museum of American Art
Harlem: Photographs by Aaron Siskind, 1932-40 (through March 17) Sixty eloquent images.
Made With Passion: The Hemphill Folk Art Collection (through January 21) Nearly 200 works from one of NMAA's most significant acquisitions.

Renwick Gallery
Glassworks (two separate installations; the first, through February 3; the second, through April 14) Site-specific works by seven glass artists.

Arthur M. Sackler Gallery
Paper and Clay from Modern Japan (January 20-March 17) Thirty pieces by prominent artists.
The Arts of China (runs indefinitely) More than 200 objects, including sculptures and paintings, span 6,000 years.

National Museum of American History
American Papermaking, 300 Years (through November 1991) A commemoration of craft and trade.
This Is Your Childhood, Charlie Brown: Children and American Culture, 1945-1968 (through April) A look at post-World War II children, as depicted in the *Peanuts* comic strip.

Anacostia Museum
Gathered Visions: Selected Works by African-American Women Artists (through April 28) Paintings, drawings, fabric art, sculptures and prints by 15 Washington, D.C. area artists.

National Museum of African Art
Paramount Chiefs of Sierra Leone: Photographic Portraits by Vera Viditz-Ward (through September 2) Contemporary photographs from West Africa.

National Portrait Gallery
Camera Portraits: Photographs from the National Portrait Gallery, London, 1839-1989 (through February 18) Portraits of figures important to British history and culture, originated by London's National Portrait Gallery.
Old Hickory: A Life Sketch of Andrew Jackson (through January 13) The seventh President's accomplishments and era, through paintings and memorabilia. See *Smithsonian horizons*, page 12.

Hirshhorn Museum & Sculpture Garden
Comparison: An Exercise in Looking (through April 21) An interactive approach to judging and appreciating works of art.

National Air and Space Museum
Blue Planet (runs indefinitely) New Smithsonian Imax film features spectacular footage of Earth and its environment, as seen from space.

Exhibition catalogs

Catalogs available currently include:
Moscow: Treasures and Traditions (paper, $24.95; cloth, $50)
Harlem: Photographs by Aaron Siskind, 1932-40 (paper, $14.95)
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Here at the Smithsonian: Three-minute TV spots take you behind the scenes.

To find out which stations carry these radio and TV programs, write: Office of Telecommunications, MAH Room BB40, Washington, D.C. 20560.

Smithsonian World: The sixth season debuts with "Gender: The Enduring Paradox," an examination of the complex roles of masculinity and femininity, on January 23. Check listings.

Smithsonian National Associates

The Program hosts events in Stockton, California, January 31-February 3.

For further information, write or call U.S. and International Events Program, 490 L'Enfant Plaza S.W., Suite 4210, Washington, D.C. 20560; (202) 287-3210.

Resident Associate Program

To become a Resident Associate, or for fee and ticket information, call 357-3030. Here are some January events:

With Justice For None (January 10; dinner at 6 P.M., lecture at 7) Lawyer Gerry Spence on his new book, a provocative indictment of the American legal system.

Spanish Dance Society (Saturday, January 12; 3 P.M. and 7:30 P.M.) The renowned dancers and musicians perform.

Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service

SITES organizes and circulates exhibitions to cities throughout the United States and abroad. To sponsor a show in your community, write SITES, Smithsonian, Washington, D.C. 20560. Here are some January exhibits:

Hartford, Connecticut (January 5-February 3) *Field to Factory: Afro-American Migration, 1915-1940*, Connecticut Historical Society.

Little Rock, Arkansas (January 5-February 3) *The Legacy Endures: Conserving Waterfowl and Wetlands*, Old State House.

Willits, California (January 10-February 21) *Family Folklore*, Mendocino County Museum.

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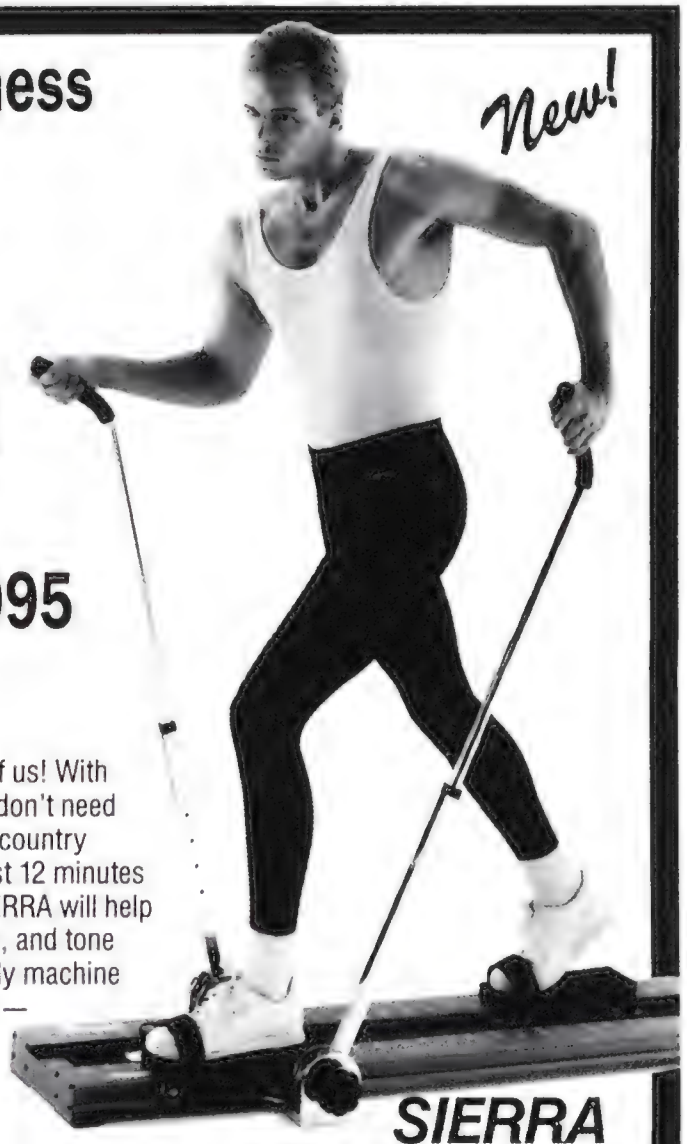

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Artist Repin painted a friend, the celebrated writer Andreyev, in 1904.

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For more than 500 years, painters and goldsmiths, jewelers and ceramicists, have flourished here, working in tiny ateliers and great workshops. "Moscow: Treasures and Traditions," at the International Gallery in the S. Dillon Ripley Center, offers more than 200 objects representative of this splendid legacy, from icons, paintings and engravings to metalwork, porcelains and historic costumes.

The range of objects—glowing medieval icons, armor crafted in the Kremlin workshops for Ivan the Terrible, exquisite dinnerware from the great 19th-century studios, paintings depicting the lost world of prerevolutionary domestic life, and canvases by the new generation of *perestroika*-era painters—reflects the overlay of history and artistic production centered in Moscow.

Showcasing objects traveling for the first time outside the Soviet Union, the exhibition is the result of a cooperative venture between the Soviet Ministry of Culture and the organizers: the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES), the Seattle Art Museum and the Seattle Organizing Committee of the Goodwill Games.

The show closes February 3. The catalog, a work of art in itself, features a series of essays by Soviet and American scholars, offering an absorbing excursion through Russian art and history.
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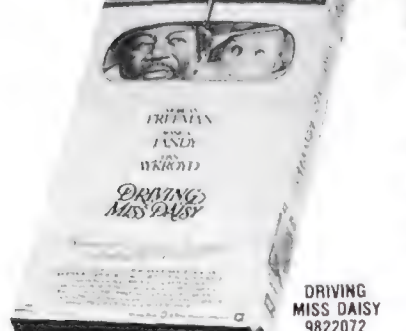

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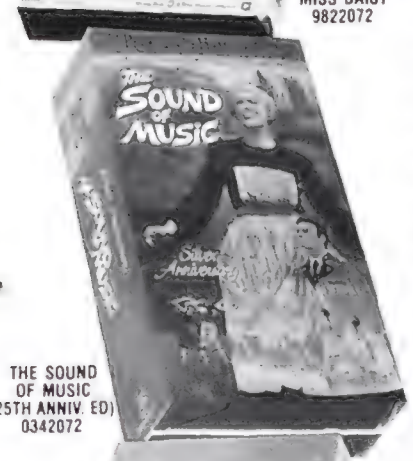

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By Elaine Segal

Obsessed by Knowing, I turned to Poison

I was out wandering in the pedestrian mall when I saw a sandwich board next to the bookstore with the word "Knowing" written on it in big letters underneath the picture of a naive-looking brunette. I knew immediately that this word "Knowing" did not refer to anything that could be found in the bookstore, but to a new kind of perfume that could be found in the department store next door. Now how did I know this?

I knew because I have spent more hours than I care to admit rummaging through the tombs of fashion magazines, and when I saw this hieroglyph of a woman with excellent bone structure staring off into space with a gerund beneath her, I knew it could only mean one thing. Also I happened to own a bottle of a cologne called Obsession, which everyone knows is the mad uncle of knowing. I knew what Obsession smelled like. But how would Knowing compare with Obsession? That was what I wanted to know.

So I went into the department store, picked up the spiral hewn-crystal bottle with "Knowing" tastefully etched across it, took off the sculpted black top that suggested a rock onto which the majestic and indifferent seas had been pounding since time began, sprayed some Knowing on my forearm and took a sniff. "What is it about Knowing?" I asked the woman behind the counter. "I don't get it."

"Oh, you have to wait until it sinks in," she said, "it gets better. Here, try Beautiful."

"No thanks," I said, "Beautiful will only confuse me. I'm trying to find out how Knowing compares with Obsession."

"There really is no comparison," she said, "they're made by different companies. If you're interested in Obsession, we don't carry it. Try across the street."

"There's no way to compare Knowing and Obsession," said the woman in the store across the street, "because we only carry Obsession."

"I see. What's that glittery stuff in the little ziggurat?"

"Obsession Body Glistener. It looks best on your collarbones, when you wear a strapless dress." She sighed. "But where are you going to wear a strapless dress in this town? They don't even have Eternity here."

"I thought eternity is everywhere."

"No," she said, "it'll take Eternity at least two years to get to *this* town."

"What's this stuff here?"

"That's Obsession shampoo."

"And this?"

"Obsession styling gel. And this is your Obsession mousse and conditioner. We also carry Obsession soap, Obsession deodorant, Obsession body powder, Obsession body bath, Obsession body lotion, Obsession body cream, Obsession shaving foam, you know, for your legs, and did I say bath crystals? Oh, yeah, and perfume, of course."

"Boy, I guess that's why they call it Obsession."

"Can I interest you in an Obsession product today?"

"Well, to tell you the truth," I said, "what I'm really interested in is comparing Knowing with Obsession and now I've smeared Obsession over the Knowing and I'm all mixed up."

"Try the store in the underground mall," she said; "they carry both."

"Obsession is, well, spicier than Knowing," said the woman in the underground mall, "but the main difference is that most men prefer Obsession to Knowing. Obsession and this." She held up a mysterious-looking purple bottle.

"What's that called, Destiny?"

"No," she said, "this is Poison. Try some." She sprayed a dram on my left forearm where it ran grayishly onto my elbow. I took a sniff. "This is very weird," I said.

"It's a very complex scent," she said. "People say it reminds them of all kinds of things—some say it's winey, some say grapey, some say bready. Just wait until the base note kicks in—it gets even more interesting."

"The base note?"

"You know, after the top notes die down. Can I interest you in some Poison today?"

"Perhaps, but could I please try some Knowing on one hand and some Obsession on the other so that I can decide between them once and for all?"

The next step was to find a man. The only one I could find was in a bad mood, blowing his nose. "Scott," I said, "smell this. Now this. OK, which do you like better?"

"It's a good thing I have a cold," said Scott, "because I hate perfume."

"That's good," I said, "that way you can be more objective. I'm trying to figure out what the difference is between Obsession and Knowing."

"Obsession is better than knowing," said Scott. "I could tell you that without smelling anything."

"Try the Poison then."

"Not bad," said Scott. "It smells sort of like bread, but like I said, I don't like perfume for two main reasons: one, it masks the smell of the body—which I like—and two, it puts a stamp of ownership on everything you touch: my clothes, my car, my life. It's just all part of the cult of artificially induced individuality that's bringing this whole sick society to its knees."

"That is a fine speech, Scott," I said.

"Actually," said Scott, "I do sort of like Gardenia. You know, like the flower? I wonder if they still make it."

"I don't know," I said; "I'll find out."

But I wasn't halfway down the driveway when the base notes on my arms tolled, and I knew. They didn't make it anymore—Gardenia was gone, lost to eternity for not being obsessive enough.

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